

# ***KINGDOM HEARTS Character Files***

## ***Short Stories***

Sora: First Journey  
Riku: My Childhood Friend  
Kairi: Wherever You Are  
King Mickey: Long Long Journey  
Donald Duck: The Wise Little Duck  
Goofy: Goofy Smile  
Terra: Dark and Void  
Ventus: Fragments of the World  
Aqua: A Piece of Cake  
Roxas: I Remember You  
Axel: I Will Not Forget You  
Xion: Don't Forget Me  
Jiminy Cricket: Your Conscience  
Chip & Dale: Chipmunk Engineers  
Merlin: Merlin's Beard!  
Ansem the Wise: Peculiar Ansem Report  
Naminé: Another Dream  
Dilan: Blooming Rose  
Aeleus: Darkness Gives Birth  
Ienzo: Memory of Childhood  
Master Xehanort: My Dear Friend  
Young Xehanort: Transcending Time  
Terra-Xehanort: Golden Eyes  
Ansem: Dark Anthem  
Xemnas: Nobody Knows

Vanitas: Vanish into the Blue  
Xigbar: The Fool  
Vexen: Flowers for Intelligence  
Saix: Say What You Will  
Demyx: A Tweet of a Substitute  
Luxord: Tumbling Dice  
Marluxia: Ephemeral Flower  
Larxene: Wise Up, Girl!  
Riku Replica: Hole in My Heart  
Maleficent: Dark Deed  
Pete: Villain among Villains  
Traverse Town: Night of Fate  
Wonderland: Golden Afternoon  
Agrabah: Try to Forget  
Atlantica: Under the Sea  
Twilight Town: Dusk till Dawn  
Beast's Castle: Something There  
Master Eraqus: Perpetual Check  
Enchanted Dominion: Sleeping Light  
Dwarf Woodlands: I'm Wishing  
Castle of Dreams: Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo!  
Kingdom of Corona: Healing Incantation  
Arendelle: Here I Stand  
Daybreak Town: You and Keyblade Story

---

## ***Sora's Story***

### ***First Journey***

So much to do,  
So little time...  
Take your time.  
Don't be afraid.  
The door is still shut.

And then I woke up from my dream.  
Blue sky, blue sea, white beach. This was Destiny Islands.  
The place we called home.  
After letting out a big yawn and sitting up, I lay back down.  
What was up with that dream? Just as I was dozing off again, Kairi's face appeared in my field of vision.  
"Whoa!"  
Startled, I got up and turned to face her.  
"Gimme a break, Kairi."  
"Sora, you lazy bum. I knew that I'd find you snoozing down here."  
"No! This huge, black thing swallowed me up! I couldn't breathe, I couldn't—"  
I frantically tried to explain. I wasn't sure if I could do a good job of explaining what happened in that dream, but it's not like I was slacking off. Well, maybe I was slacking off because I was asleep?  
"Are you still dreaming?"

"It wasn't a dream! Or was it? I don't know. What was that place? So bizarre..."  
"Yeah, sure."  
Kairi sounded like she didn't believe me as she began to walk away.  
"Say, Kairi, what was your hometown like? You know, where you grew up."  
"I've told you before, I don't remember."  
Back then, the only other place I knew of besides Destiny Islands was the town where Kairi had lived as a kid. But, although she'd told me the place existed, she didn't remember it at all.  
"Nothing at all?"  
"Nothing."  
Still sitting on the sand, I looked up at Kairi.  
"You ever want to go back?"  
"Hmm. Well, I'm happy here."  
Kairi gazed out to sea with a strange look on her face. She didn't look lonely, or sad, or happy, but I could tell she was feeling something. She often had that expression.  
"But you know...I wouldn't mind going to see it."  
"I'd like to see it too."  
Kairi reflected on that, and I responded.

“Along with any other worlds out there! I want to see ‘em all!”

That was my number one wish back then. I wanted to see the town where Kairi was born. I wanted to see places other than

Destiny Islands.

“So what’re we waiting for?”

“Hey, aren’t you guys forgetting about me?”

Just as Kairi spoke, we heard Riku’s voice. Riku was carrying a log under his arm.

“So, I guess I’m the only one working on the raft.”

Riku tossed the log at me and, flustered, I caught it. Seeing this, Kairi laughed.

“And you’re just as lazy as he is!”

“Hee hee, so you noticed.”

Kairi shrugged with a giggle and then spread her arms wide.

“Okay, we’ll finish it together. I’ll race you!”

“Huh?”

“What, are you kidding?”

“Ready? Go!”

Even though Riku was sitting next to me, Kairi insisted. Riku and I looked at each other, stood up at nearly the same time, and

started running.

We dashed along the beach all the way to the cove.

That evening, Kairi and I were sitting next to each other on a paopu tree on the small island across the bridge. Nearby, Riku leaned against the tree.

The sun was sinking toward the horizon.

“So, Kairi’s home is out there somewhere, right?” I asked. Riku was the one who answered.

“Could be. We’ll never know by staying here.”

He said this without taking his eyes off the horizon. I then asked him a question because I didn’t have a clue of the answer.

“But how far could a raft take us?”

“Who knows? If we have to, we’ll think of something else.”

Although Riku was only a year older than me, he and I were completely different.

## ***Riku’s Story***

### ***My Childhood Friend***

To tell you the truth, Sora...I was jealous of you.

When did I start harboring that feeling? I thought about this I sat next to Sora on the Dark Margin.

Was it when Sora became a hero of the Keyblade?

Or did I feel that way when we were still on the islands, from the time when we were kids?

There’s nothing strange about me thinking I’m higher on the totem pole than Sora. After all, an age difference of a year was huge when we were kids, and I used to act like Sora’s big brother and take him places. When did that change?

We defeated Xemnas, but the darkness was deep here. The Realm of Darkness, where we could have defeated thousands of Heartless and they’d still keep coming.

My strength nearly spent, I fell to my knees.

“Riku!”

Sora helped me up.

“Sora...I can’t...”

“So, suppose you get to another world.”

This time it was Kairi who asked Riku a question. She continued, “What would you do there?”

“Well, I haven’t really thought about it. It’s just...I’ve always wondered why we’re here on this island. If there are any other worlds out there, why did we end up on this one?”

The sound of the waves accompanied Riku’s voice.

“And suppose there are other worlds...”

He spoke slowly. It seemed as though he was considering his choice of words.

“Then ours is just a little piece of something much greater. So we could have just as easily ended up somewhere else, right?”

“I don’t know.”

After hearing all that, I didn’t understand at all. I rolled onto my back on the tree.

“Exactly.”

Riku slowly started walking.

“That’s why we need to go out there and find out. Just sitting here won’t change a thing. It’s the same old stuff. So let’s go.”

Kairi looked up at the sky. Still on my back, I gazed at the ocean. Riku was right. The sunset was pretty every day, but it basically never changed. Sometimes we’d have stormy nights, but aside from that, the sky and sea would always be the same. That’s why I wanted to see a different world.

“You’ve been thinking a lot lately, haven’t you?” Kairi said softly.

“Thanks to you.”

Riku turned to face her.

“If you hadn’t come here, I probably would’ve never thought of any of this. Kairi, thanks.”

“You’re welcome.”

Kairi laughed. I watched the two of them. And the setting sun shone on us like it always did. Yes, everything was the same as it had ever been.

Our journey started from that place. We wanted to go somewhere, anywhere that wasn’t there, and soon we would depart the islands. But I had the feeling we would return there at the end of our travels.

Thus our journey began.

It was difficult to breathe. I felt like I couldn’t walk anymore.

“Don’t say another word! It’s not over. It’s just not.”

He put my arm over his shoulders and stood. Sora never gives up at a time like this.

“How can you say that? Even if we could go on...look where we are.”

I felt like that was a levelheaded conclusion. But Sora smiled and looked ahead of us.

“Aw, c’mon, Riku. You’ve been hanging out in darkness too long. You gotta try and think positive!”

He started to walk. My footsteps were heavy as I leaned on him. I couldn’t walk anymore, I didn’t want to walk anymore, I thought.

“Sora.”

“Hm?”

Hearing his name, Sora examined my expression with a smile on his face. When he made a face like that in a situation

like this, I had no choice but to do what he wanted. I lifted my head, like Sora, and gazed ahead into the darkness.

"You lead."

"Got it."

He nodded, pulling me along as he walked. How far would this darkness go? I'd walked a lot of dark paths, but this might have been the first one that didn't have a way out. But even on a path like this, Sora kept walking.

"You know..."

I spoke up, and Sora looked at me again. He had a pained expression on his face, and seeing this made my chest tighten. I told him something I'd never spoken of before. It was like a repentant confession.

"I always figured I was better at stuff than you."

"Really?"

But Sora's reaction wasn't what I'd expected. His reply made it sound like it didn't matter to him at all.

"Are you mad?"

The question just came out of me, and Sora stopped.

"No. I kinda always thought you were better at everything, too."

Ah, it was probably natural for him to think that way. After all, I'm just a little bit older than him. But I was proud of such a natural thing.

Then Sora looked up and stared at something straight ahead.

"Riku—look. What's that light?"

I also looked up.

A faint but inviting light was visible from far away. We mustered the last of our strength and started walking toward it.

However, the light wasn't an exit. It resembled the dim glow of a moon floating above a gloomy beach.

Here, we could hear the sound of waves, which reminded me of our island home, but the place was otherwise enveloped in silence.

"End of the road."

"Yep."

Sora quietly nodded in response to my remark.

"Put me down. I can walk."

At this, he released my arm, and I stood up on the sandy beach. As Sora took a step toward the water's edge, I watched him from behind. No exit was in sight. Even from behind him, I could sense Sora's fatigue.

"You know...maybe the darkness has gotten to me, too," Sora murmured. Maybe he, too, had begun to give up on the idea of leaving this place. The thought of that made me feel a little dizzy. I fell to my knees on the beach and then just collapsed.

I couldn't move anymore.

"Riku!"

Sora rushed over and helped me up.

"This world is perfect for me. If this is what the world really is—just this—then maybe I should fade back into darkness."

## ***Kairi's Story*** ***Wherever You Are***

Thinking of you, wherever you are...

I sent a letter that started with this sentence, back when I'd forgotten about you. I'm not even sure if "forgotten" is the right word, but you had vanished from within me—from within everyone.

"Riku..."

"If the world is made of light and darkness...We'll be the darkness."

Sora stretched his legs out and sat beside me.

"Yeah. The other side...the Realm of Light is safe now. Kairi, the king, and the others are there."

"That's what I mean. Hey, Sora...Could you help me? I want to get down to the water."

Sora gave a small nod, put my arm over his shoulders again, and helped me stand up. We walked slowly toward the water's edge. My legs felt as stiff as posts.

"At least the waves sound the same," I found myself murmuring. Maybe it wasn't terrible to end up in a place like this that reminded me of our home. I continued the conversation from earlier.

"What I said back there...about thinking I was better at stuff than you..."

"Hm?" Sora responded as he gazed at the sea.

"To tell you the truth, Sora...I was jealous of you."

When I said this, he finally looked at me.

"What for?"

I thought for just a brief moment. Then I opened my mouth to speak. This was my repentance. The reason I fell into darkness was because of my jealousy of Sora. But it wasn't his fault. It happened simply because I was weak.

"I wished I could live life the way you do. Just following my heart."

After I said this, Sora gazed at the horizon as he responded.

"Yeah, well, I've got my share of problems, too."

"Like what?"

I smiled just a little as I listened to him.

"Like...wanting to be like you."

"Hm."

This saddened me a bit, and I replied in the most cheerful voice I could muster.

"Well, there is one advantage to being me...Something you could never imitate."

"Really? What's that?"

"Having you for a friend."

For a moment, Sora looked astonished, and then he took a small breath.

"Then I guess...I'm okay the way I am. I've got something you could never imitate too."

He smiled as he replied and looked out at the horizon. The dim moon floating in the sky at the world's end.

Each of us had things that only we could do. Our hearts were both filled with the same kind of happiness.

I was glad to be Sora's friend.

"Light."

I reflexively narrowed my eyes at the light shining like the morning sun before us.

"The Door to Light...We'll go together."

Sora stood up and held his hand out to me.

"Yeah," I answered, and the two of us began to walk.

"Do you remember those boys who used to hang out with us?"

When I asked Selphie this, she seemed puzzled as she said Riku's name. I'd forgotten all about you. But something of you remained within me.

I put a letter in a small bottle.

“What’s that?” Selphie asked as I sent the bottle out to sea.

“A letter...I wrote it yesterday, to the boy I can’t remember. I said that no matter where he is...I’ll find him. One day. And when I stopped writing, I remembered we made a promise, something important. This letter is where it starts. I know it.”

I watched the bottle rock among the waves as I answered. That was when I remembered. Your name.

Starts with an S. Right, Sora?

Some time had passed since then, and I continued to write letters to you—Sora—that I never sent.

And Lea, or Axel, was next to me in the Secret Forest on a hill where we could see the sunset. You were still in the middle of a long journey, and I had been training too so I could fight alongside you. I had a feeling that Axel’s eyes were just a little moist from watching the sunset, maybe because it was so dazzling.

“A letter?”

“Yup.”

I nodded to him. I’d been writing letters every day.

“To Sora?”

“Mmm, technically, yes. But I won’t send it. It’s more for me.”

At that moment, I remembered the letter I’d written to you on the island when I’d forgotten you.

I didn’t want to forget you again, and I never wanted to feel the way did back when...back when you became a Heartless.

“This time, I’ll protect you.”

After you became a Heartless, I held you tight. Other Heartless around us closed in to attack. But then they disappeared in a

flash of light, and you came back.

“Kairi, thank you.”

After you said that, we ran out of there together.

And later, you made a promise.

“Remember what you said before? I’m always with you, too. I’ll come back to you. I promise!”

## ***King Mickey’s Story***

### ***Long Long Journey***

In that place in the Realm Between, I cried your name.

Because I always wanted to be by your side.

Helped by Aqua, Riku and I met on the other side of the Door to Darkness.

I met Aqua, Terra, and Ventus long before that. At the time, I was still in training. I left Disney Castle in the care of Minnie, Donald, and Goofy to train with the great Yen Sid. But after hearing about a strange phenomenon in the worlds, I couldn’t sit still, so I rushed out with a Star Shard that let me cross the barriers between worlds. And where it took me was a wasteland with nothing but rocks.

There, I met Ventus, who was fighting Vanitas. Together, we drove Vanitas off.

“Thanks for before, I owe ya. The name’s Ventus. What’s yours?”

“I’m Mickey.”

I introduced myself with a smile. When I explained the details of how I came to be here, Ventus grinned.

“Well, that makes both of us. I ran off, too.”

I showed him the Star Shard.

“All I hafta do is think it, and the Star Shard will take me anywhere I wanna go. At least I thought it would. I haven’t quite got the fine points down, like...when, or where...It just

“I know you will!”

But after that promise, we all forgot about you for a time.

I’ve been thinking that next time, I should help you. Because I was always the one who was being saved. That’s why I decided that waiting wasn’t good enough.

When we were little, we drew on the wall of the Secret Place. You drew me, and I drew you. After you disappeared, I looked at that drawing again. I noticed you’d added a part where you were giving me a paopu fruit.

“If two people share one, their destinies become intertwined. They’ll remain a part of each other’s lives no matter what.”

Now, as we sat together on a paopu tree in Destiny Islands and watched the sunset, I recalled all kinds of things.

“Hey, why’s Riku all alone?”

“He said he needed time to himself. Let’s let him be,” I said to Sora, who was worried about Riku alone on the beach. I picked

a paopu fruit and held it up to Sora’s mouth.

“Here.”

“Huh?”

Sora had a shocked expression on his face as he looked at me. I offered the other paopu fruit I was holding to him.

“Tomorrow’s fight will be our toughest yet. I want to be a part of your life no matter what. That’s all.”

Sora’s face suddenly grew serious, and he accepted the fruit from me.

“Kairi, I’ll keep you safe.”

“Uh-uh. Let me keep you safe.”

We ate the paopu fruit together.

This wasn’t just for luck. It was a promise.

Sora protected me, but could I protect him? Sora, don’t give up. Don’t disappear.

Because you carry everyone’s hopes.

Promise me.

kinda kicks in whenever it wants to. But I wouldn’t have met you if it hadn’t brought me here.”

Ventus peered at the Star Shard in wonder. Just then, the Shard emitted a powerful light, and both of us flew away.

The next place I ended up was Radiant Garden. This was back when Ansem the Wise still ruled the place. I seemed to have gotten separated from Ventus within the light. And then, I met Aqua. She was standing with her Keyblade at the ready to protect a little girl.

I rushed in and got rid of the Unversed who were about to attack the two of them.

“Hurry! Ya gotta get that girl to someplace that’s safe.”

Aqua picked up the girl and began to run. When she returned moments later, we fought together.

We hurried over to the girl after the battle. For some reason, I sensed there was something special about her. That girl was Kairi. I didn’t realize it for the longest time. Aqua got down on her knee to be level with Kairi. Then, she looked at me and spoke.

“Thank you. My name is Aqua. I train under Master Eraqus.”

“And I’m Mickey. I used to be Yen Sid’s apprentice. I came back to him for some more training.”

Aqua gazed at Kairi.

"I sense light within this girl. You think that's why they attacked her?"

"Yep, I think ya might be absolutely right. If ya ask me, she must be somebody pretty extraordinary."

When I said this, Aqua nodded and reached for a handshake. But just then, a powerful light shone from my pocket. It was the Star Shard.

"Oh no, not now! I'll be okay!"

With that, I flew off again.

Afterward, I battled Master Xehanort and got thrown into the Lanes Between. And Aqua was the one who saved me.

When she took me back to Master Yen Sid, I was injured and unconscious. Even so, I managed to wake up, and I followed Aqua and the others to the Keyblade Graveyard. But the first thing I saw when I got there was Aqua collapsed on the ground.

When she finally regained consciousness, Vanitas had already taken over Ventus's body. After the fierce battle, Vanitas's χ-blade went out of control, and we were swallowed by a vortex of light and darkness.

But I managed to find Aqua and Ventus somehow and I took them back to Master Yen Sid again. Ventus remained unconscious.

"I'll keep him safe—until he wakes. Forever, if I have to," Aqua said, but in response, Master Yen Sid shook his head.

"I will tell you what your friend needs right now. It is not your protection. He needs you to believe. You see, Ventus's heart hangs in the balance. It sleeps in the place between light and darkness. From all I can perceive, that means he will be looking for a friend—one who believes in him—to show him the way home. Just as long as you love him...then Ventus will be able to find you when he wakes. He can follow that love back to where he belongs—the Realm of Light."

I thought I should cheer Aqua up, too.

"Don't you worry, Aqua. I believe in Ven, too. Gosh, he's been as good a friend to me as anybody. And if both you and me believe in him with all our hearts...then he'll have two lights to follow instead of one."

These were the bonds we'd formed. However, Terra hadn't been found. So all we could do was watch as Aqua set off.

After that, I became a Keyblade Master. I returned to Disney Castle for a while, but I remained ignorant of where Aqua had ended up.

And then I learned that something strange was happening—stars were disappearing from the night sky.

I left a letter for Donald and Goofy and set out again. While searching for the Keyblade of darkness, I eventually met

Aqua in the Realm of Darkness. Aided by her, Riku and I closed the door to Kingdom Hearts of Worlds' Hearts together.

We were supposed to stick together after that, but soon I was separated from Riku. But our hearts were connected. After Riku made it to the basement of Castle Oblivion, I called out to him with all my might.

"Remember, Riku, you're not alone."

Riku was battling Ansem, who resided within him.

"Listen close. The light'll never give up on you. You'll always find it, even in the deepest darkness!"

I frantically followed my connection to him. And just as Ansem was about to take over Riku's body, I was able to rush in.

"Phew! Sure glad I made it in time! That oughta keep Ansem busy for a while. Sorry I couldn't come here sooner, Riku."

"Your Majesty, is it you?"

Riku had the biggest look of surprise on his face.

"Uh-huh!"

And then he hugged me.

"Whoa! That tickles!"

"This time, you're not an illusion. I'm so glad that you could make it here."

After Riku released me, he sat down as though in relief.

"I made a promise to you that I would find a way, didn't I? Don't worry! We can defeat him together!"

But Riku shook his head in response.

"Sorry...I've gotta face him alone."

I reluctantly agreed to this. Naturally, he felt that defeating Ansem would be meaningless if he didn't do it himself. I understood that. But I did wind up helping just a little.

And when Riku's solitary battle was over, I think I said this:

"The road you chose—I didn't know. Light and dark, back to back. With you, I think they might meet in a way nobody's seen before. Wonder where that road leads. I'd like to see myself. I'd like to walk the road with ya."

Riku seemed a little embarrassed as he laughed.

"Your Majesty, I'm really flattered...I don't know what to say."

"Gosh, Riku, you know you don't have to call me that now. We're pals."

"Fair enough, Mickey."

And with that, our journey began.

It wasn't the twilight road to nightfall, but the road to dawn—and we walked it together.

## ***Donald Duck's Story***

### ***The Wise Little Duck***

Sometimes I think about what happened back then. Because I'd never seen Donald like that before. I might as well mention that I'd never seen the king with that kind of expression before, either.

This was during the decisive battle in Hollow Bastion.

The king told us to let Leon and the others take care of it and go search for Kairi. Donald and Goofy fibbed and said they would, then ushered me on. After that, we fought Demyx, and then the king, who'd chased after us, caught up with us. Donald and Goofy got troubled looks on their faces.

After glaring at the two for a moment, the king smiled like he always did as he spoke.

"You sure have lotsa friends to help."

Donald and Goofy exchanged glances, looking relieved. Those two both disobeyed the king's orders because they believed he'd forgive them.

"So, I guess we better all pull together and finish this battle for good!"

"Yes, Your Majesty!" the three of us responded to the king in unison. And then it happened.

We heard an explosion at the top of the cliff, and a huge rock tumbled down.

"Look out!" Goofy shouted and thrust the king away almost simultaneously. Then he took a direct hit from the rock, which sent him flying.

"Goofy!"

We rushed over to our fallen friend. But he didn't move.

"Hey! You're the king's captain! You gotta get up!"

Donald desperately shook Goofy, but Goofy still didn't regain consciousness.

"C'mon, wake up!" I shouted next to Donald, but Goofy remained completely limp.

"I'm sorry about the ice cream!"

Donald was truly desperate.

"Goofy!"

Although he hit Goofy's chest while calling out to him, Goofy still didn't wake up.

"Goofy..."

Donald seemed on the verge of tears. I'd never heard him sound so miserable before. Without any idea what was happening, I peered at Goofy's face. He still wouldn't wake up.

"This is not happening...It can't be happening. It can't."

My own voice might have sounded pretty miserable too. As I sat there not knowing what to do, the first person to take action was the king.

"They'll pay for this."

He threw off the black coat he'd been wearing, grasped his Keyblade, and started running toward the swarm of Heartless.

"Rrrrraaaah!!!"

As if in response, Donald let out a yell and ran after him. The look on his face was really, truly like no expression of his I'd ever seen before.

I never wanted to see him look like that again or hear his voice sound like that again.

But this is what happens when the three of us remember and talk about it.

"Wak..."

Looking a little embarrassed, Donald hung his head.

## **Goofy's Story**

### **Goofy Smile**

Sometimes I think about what happened back then. Just when I thought I was completely done for, it was Goofy who protected me.

This was back in Hollow Bastion.

"Goofy. Let's go," Donald said. I no longer held the Keyblade. Riku had left with it. Goofy looked at Donald with a mystified expression.

"We have to remember our mission."

The king had instructed the two of them to go with the person holding a "key"—the Keyblade master. In other words, now that the Keyblade belonged to Riku, the two had to follow him.

"Oh! Well, I know the king told us to follow the key and all...But..."

Goofy seemed worried as he looked at me. Donald started walking. Goofy glanced back and forth between him and me.

"Sora, sorry."

Donald stopped for just a moment, and then he broke into a run. With a sad look on his face, Goofy followed.

Now that I was left all alone, the one who joined up with me was Beast. When he asked me why I came here, I remembered Kairi, and we managed to make it to the castle.

The ones waiting for us when we entered were Riku, Donald, and Goofy.

All I had was a wooden sword when Riku suddenly attacked me. In that moment, Goofy was the one who protected me.

"Sora ain't gonna go anywhere!"

This was in the interior of the Gummi Ship as it gently floated through the Ocean Between.

"That sure did hurt."

Goofy, too, looked a little embarrassed as he scratched his head.

"Everyone was all in a panic."

"It was your fault, Goofy! You wouldn't wake up!"

Maybe Donald was extremely embarrassed now, because he was frantically defending himself.

"I guess you're right, but I did wake up before too long."

Goofy gave his carefree answer with a smile.

"The king made the wrong assumption first thing and then everyone panicked," Sora said, and Donald puffed out his chest.

"That's right! He rushed out and didn't come back!"

"Does that have something to do with it?" Sora was puzzled.

Donald retorted, "Sure it does!"

Goofy looked at the two of them and laughed.

"But I'm sure glad I got to see you fellas again."

"That's our line. We were all really worried, you know."

"Gawrsh, thanks, Donald," Goofy calmly said in answer to Donald's annoyed comment. This was a normal sight.

If it weren't for the two of them, we might not have made it this far—no, we definitely wouldn't have.

I'm so glad I met them way back in Traverse Town. Yes, despite the fact Donald and I argue sometimes!

Even if there are times when I'll have to press on by myself in the future, I bet I'll be fine because my connections with the two of them will never disappear.

And I have the feeling I'll be able to laugh at the memory of Donald's voice, wherever I am.

He assumed a stance with his shield and faced Riku.

"You'd betray your king?"

"Not on your life!" Goofy responded to Riku's question before looking over his shoulder at me and smiling.

"But I'm not gonna betray Sora, either, 'cause he's become one of my best buddies after all we've been through together!"

And then he waved to Donald, who still stood next to Riku.

"See ya later, Donald. Could ya tell the king I'm really sorry?"

"Hold on, Goofy!" Donald shouted as he stamped his feet for a moment.

"We'll tell him together."

And then he ran up to me.

"Well, you know...All for one, and one for all."

"I guess you're stuck with us, Sora."

The two of them had apologetic looks on their faces, and then they looked at Riku.

"Thanks a lot...Donald, Goofy."

That's when I knew I'd made more friends who were important to me, besides Riku and Kairi.

"How will you fight without a weapon?"

In response to Riku's question, I think this is what I said: "I know now I don't need the Keyblade. I've got a better weapon. My heart."

"Your heart? What good will that weak little thing do for you?"

Riku laughed scornfully at my words.

“Although my heart may be weak, it’s not alone. It’s grown with each new experience, and it’s found a home with all the friends I’ve made. I’ve become a part of their heart, just as they’ve become a part of mine. And if they think of me now and then...if they don’t forget me...then our hearts will be one.”

And then I held my wooden sword at the ready.

“I don’t need a weapon. My friends are my power!”

The instant I shouted that, the wooden sword became the Keyblade in my hands.

“Sora, are ya gonna eat that?”

“Yes, I am!”

We were at Little Chef’s restaurant in Twilight Town. A large amount of delicious food had been laid out in front of us.

“This is the first time I’ve ever had pumpkin velatie.”

“It’s not pumpkin velatie, it’s velouté!”

Donald pointed out Goofy’s mispronunciation. Sometimes Goofy says stuff wrong. I wonder why that is? I have sharp ears, so it’s not like I’m mishearing him.

Well, this was the first time I’d had pumpkin velouté, too, and I didn’t really know what it was either, so it’s all good. It was super delicious. Somehow, it made me feel energized.

## ***Terra’s Story***

### ***Dark and Void***

It was darkness.

Nothing but darkness.

No, that’s not even what it was.

If the Realm of Darkness was what Aqua had fallen into, where was I? Did I ever exist to begin with? Surely...no, I probably existed. But I didn’t even know where I was. I was the sealed being at Xehanort’s back. My own consciousness—my own heart—was sealed. And where in this world could my heart be found?

Maybe that place wasn’t even darkness, but the realm of nothingness. A realm with neither light nor darkness. Without light, there’s no darkness, and without darkness, there’s no light.

That’s how it was. It doesn’t mean I was sleeping, like Ven. I wasn’t in the world of sleep, in a dream, but rather a world of nothing, and yet it existed. Because of this, pain, sadness, and hatred became nothingness and attacked me. They made me writhe in agony. Maybe this place resembled the world of the Unversed. A void that swallowed even sadness and pain. A world where hope and joy had never existed to begin with.

Nothingness resembles darkness, but it isn’t darkness; it doesn’t create anything. In that world, all I did was wait with determination. In that world, where my actions had become thoughts that I could no longer even remember, I waited. Well, maybe I believed in that promise.

I still had something to think about. Was the power of darkness really something to be detested? Before my eyes, the boy whom I’d once passed the Keyblade to had grown, conquered the power of darkness, and now followed the light. Why hadn’t I been able to do that?

## ***Ventus’s Story***

### ***Fragments of the World***

I really didn’t remember anything.

I’d been fractured for a long time. It was because of Xehanort, and my missing half was Vanitas. I knew that already, and back then I should have remembered a lot of

“Sora, you should try this eel martylote too.”

“Matelote!”

Donald corrected Goofy again as he munched his food.

“This stuff is delicious.”

“It sure is.”

“It really is!”

All of us completely cleaned our plates.

Man, I was so full.

Getting to sit down and eat with everyone made the food taste even better.

“I don’t even wanna have dessert now.”

“Gawrsh, Sora, it’s not good to overeat like that.”

Goofy patted his stomach as he spoke.

Yeah, sometimes Goofy says something that makes him sound like a big brother. Sometimes he notices things we don’t, too. He’s surprisingly dependable, but normally he doesn’t give that impression at all.

If Goofy hadn’t saved me that time, and if Donald hadn’t come back, I’m sure I wouldn’t be here. If all that stuff hadn’t happened, I might never have gotten the Keyblade back. I was able to regain the strength in my heart because the two of them came back.

I can’t say that, though, cause it’s too embarrassing!

And there were hearts I was close to. They continued to gently encourage me. It was because of those very hearts that I can now stand in front of your grave like this.

My master, did you ever forgive me? Or have you not forgiven me and I should keep living to atone for what I’ve done? I know there will never be an answer to my question, and I know that forgiveness for wrongdoing is very unlikely. I think it’s presumptuous and a sign of weakness to even believe that I’ve already been forgiven.

“Terra, Ven! Let’s have some tea.”

Aqua had a smile on her face, and Ven looked back at me. Maybe the two of them had forgiven me. But I couldn’t forgive myself yet.

“Terra?”

Aqua showed just a bit of worry as she looked at me. I exhaled quietly so as to not make it sound like a sigh, and then I smiled.

“...I’d like to have cake that isn’t sugary.”

“It’s been a long time since I’ve made a galactic caramel pound cake.”

“I’d like a strawberry preserve tart.”

After Aqua’s response, Ven smiled and spoke.

“That was Master’s favorite—and Terra hates it.”

Aqua chuckled, and then she looked just a little sad.

We will continue to bear the grief of losing our master. But we won’t be alone.

Let’s gaze at the night sky again, the three of us, and look for shooting stars.

From now on, we’ll always be together.

things, but the memories I could recall seemed like they were someone else’s, and I didn’t really know what to do.

Although I had memories from before I woke up in front of Aqua and Terra, they were kinda hazy.

It was fun being with Aqua and Terra, and I wanted to fight for them. But in the end, I fell asleep. The two of them fought for me, and at last I woke up. I have a feeling that when I did, there were still a lot of things I didn't understand.

Maybe I still don't really understand, even now.

But what I know for sure is that Aqua and Terra are with me. And I know that they protected me. That's why I want to protect them.

Not understanding a lot of things is too common for me, and I don't even know what I don't understand. I think maybe some part of me is still fractured. Or maybe I just don't understand, and nothing is missing. Hey, turns out I don't know that, either.

Put an end to me.

Ultimately, the two of them didn't do that.

They didn't end me.

That's why I'm standing here now. Back when the  $\chi$ -blade was born, it wouldn't have been strange if I'd disappeared along with Vanitas. I still believe that now.

Maybe my master knew some truth that I didn't. But he isn't with us anymore.

"Terra, Ven! Let's have some tea."

Aqua smiled. Seeing her say that and smile here, in the Land of Departure, made it feel like I'd gone back in time. Back when Aqua baked a cake, Master ate it with relish, and

## ***Aqua's Story***

### ***A Piece of Cake***

In the darkness, sometimes I remembered. The quiet days when I trained under the protection of my master. Training just with Terra was peaceful and fulfilling, but after Ven arrived, it felt like a different kind of warmth had been added.

Ven held his wooden sword in a reverse grip.

"Very good, that's a defensive posture. Going on the offensive is impossible without defense."

Our master instructed Ven, and Terra and I happened to hear as we were engaged in a bout. The sound of wooden swords colliding, the increasingly ragged breathing, the flying sweat, Master's voice.

"Master! Why don't we take a break?"

I called out to everyone with a smile. That day, I baked—that's right, strawberry preserve tarts. Master's favorite pastry.

"Ven, give me a hand with the tea."

At the time, Ven had only just woken up, and it seemed like nothing had come back to him. Even if we talked to him, he didn't answer, and he never showed so much as a smile. He could do what he was told, and he knew he'd once handled a blade.

It was after a match with Terra that Ven completely woke up.

"You're trying too hard to move your body. You need to learn to let your body move you. Right?"

Terra raised his wooden sword. It had been fashioned to look like a Keyblade, and it was the best one he'd ever made. He had even carved his name into it.

He stood and cleared his throat a bit unnaturally.

"In your hand, take this blade. And so long as you have the makings, then through this simple act of taking, its wielder you shall one day be made."

He held out the Keyblade in a motion imitating that of a Bequeathing.

"Being a Keyblade Master is all I've dreamed about."

"Well, you're not the only one," I reminded him. That was our dream—and our goal.

Terra made a face at the idea of sweets. I'd stuff myself full of anything Aqua made because it was delicious and made me happy.

The time we enjoyed then will never return, but from here on out we have to walk forward. When I looked at Terra, he had an awkward smile on his face just like back then.

"...I'd like to have cake that isn't sugary."

Aqua laughed happily in response to Terra's comment.

"It's been a long time since I've made a galactic caramel pound cake."

Aqua laughed just like she did way back when. I think she really is strong. I spoke to Aqua and mentioned the name of Master's favorite pastry.

"I'd like a strawberry preserve tart."

"That was Master's favorite—and Terra hates it."

Aqua chuckled, and then she looked just a little sad.

Our hearts harbored grief over losing our master, and it probably wouldn't disappear for a while. And whatever part of me had been fractured probably still wasn't filled.

But now I wasn't alone.

I don't want to be alone anymore, ever.

Let's gaze at the night sky again, the three of us, and look for shooting stars.

From now on, we'll always be together.

Terra knelt in front of Ven and held out the wooden Keyblade. "I know. You, me, and Ven all share the same dream. Here, Ven, you can have this."

Ven quietly reached out and grasped the wooden Keyblade. I thought I saw him smile just the slightest bit for the first time.

"Hmm? What are you going to use, Terra?"

"I can make a new one. In the meantime, I'll take the one Ven was using."

Terra picked up the wooden sword Ven had used, and then with his free hand he ruffled Ven's golden hair.

"That's great, isn't it, Ven?"

"...Thanks."

That was the first word we heard Ven utter.

"Ven!"

Terra and I exclaimed our friend's name at almost the same time.

"What's wrong, you guys?"

Ven looked at us with a mystified expression. Without thinking, I hugged him. And beside me, Terra continued to ruffle his hair.

"Cut it out, Terra, Aqua. What gives? I'm not a kid!"

Ven's response made Terra and me look at each other and then burst into laughter. Ven joined in, looking embarrassed.

That was the first time the three of us laughed together.

And after a long, long journey, we returned to this land.

What I know now is that this land—and Master Eraqus—was protecting us. Our master had always been with one of us.

I imagine those peaceful days will never return...no, surely we can create them again.

"Terra, Ven! Let's have some tea," I called to the two of them, who had finished their long journey and returned home together.

"Terra?"



He remained silent, which made me worry just a little. Then he turned to me and spoke.

“...I’d like to have cake that isn’t sugary.”

Yeah, I wanted to bake something again after so long.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve made a galactic caramel pound cake.”

“I’d like a strawberry preserve tart.”

## **Roxas’s Story**

### ***I Remember You***

There were seven days left in my summer vacation.

“On our next day off, let’s all go to the beach, huh? Just the three of us.”

I definitely remembered someone saying that to me. “Three of us” ...Who in the world were the three? I’d forgotten everything. When I stood in front of Sora, I remembered.

I thought I remembered everything. But there was actually something I hadn’t remembered—something really important.

Way back, I didn’t really know anything, and Axel had just explained what a summer vacation was. It was on my first day off since I’d joined the Organization. Though, if I told people like Sora that even the Organization had vacation days, they would look at me funny. All of a sudden I was told I had a day off, and I couldn’t find anything to do, so I was eating sea salt ice cream at the top of the clock tower. Axel arrived, and together we watched Hayner’s group play in front of the plaza. Back then, I didn’t know the names of Hayner and the others yet.

“Are the kids here on summer vacation already? ...Nah, can’t be. It’s much too early.”

“Summer vacation? What’s that?”

“It’s a dream come true, that’s what—where they get a whole month off.”

When we talked about things like this, it was weird that Axel had memories from when he was human and I didn’t have any. It made me uneasy.

“Most kids spend the time just goofing off with their friends. Hanging around with friends is fun. I’d forgotten all that since becoming a Nobody, I guess.”

That probably meant Axel had friends when he was human. I thought Axel was my only friend. But I remembered.

At the time, I intended to leave the Organization.

“Your mind’s made up?”

Even Axel’s question didn’t stop me. Because I didn’t trust him anymore.

“Why did the Keyblade choose me? I have to know.”

“You can’t turn on the Organization! You get on their bad side, and they’ll destroy you!” Axel shouted, and I stopped at last.

“No one would miss me.”

After saying this, I started walking. But I had no destination. I didn’t know where to go, so I ended up at my usual spot, the clock tower.

## **Axel’s Story**

### ***I Will Not Forget You***

You will need to follow your memories. Trust what you remember and seek what you forget. Then you will find someone very special. Our most precious memories lie so deep within our hearts that they’re out of reach.

“This yours?”

“That was Master’s favorite—and Terra hates it,” I answered Ven with a smile.

We’d lost our master, but we weren’t alone.

Let’s gaze at the night sky again, the three of us, and look for shooting stars.

From now on, we’ll always be together.

The one who arrived after me was the girl I forgot for a long time—Xion.

“Roxas...This is him. It’s Sora.”

With her hood removed, I saw that Xion wasn’t Xion. Her face had changed into someone I’d never seen before. And this person was the one I’d been wanting to meet.

“You’re next, Roxas. I have to make you a part of me, too. Don’t you see? This is why I was created.”

With her coat thrown off, Xion was a puppet.

I didn’t want to fight her. But she attacked me.

*Please, Roxas—end me.*

As I was fighting, I began to lose what I knew. Who was I fighting? I was rapidly forgetting things that were important to me.

And before I knew it, an unfamiliar girl with black hair was collapsing in front of me.

“Who are you...again? It’s weird. I feel like I’m forgetting something really important.”

The girl slowly opened her eyes.

“You’ll be...better off now...Roxas.”

I held her up.

“Am I...the one who did this to you?”

“No...It was my choice...to go away now. Better that than to do nothing...and let Xemnas have his way.”

The girl put her hand on mine.

“Goodbye, Roxas. See you again.”

A small smile appeared on her face.

“I’m glad...I got to meet you. Oh...and of course, Axel, too. You’re both my best friends. Never forget. That’s the truth.”

In that moment, I remembered. Xion. “No! Xion...Who else will I have ice cream with?”

But she was disappearing.

“Xion.”

All that remained of her was a Thalassa Shell.

And I wanted to get Xion back, so I fought Riku. I lost all my memories, and then I was in Twilight Town. And when I stood before Sora, I thought I remembered. But that wasn’t true.

Now, I remember everything.

I remember you, Xion.

I’d picked up an odd-shaped sword made of wood. Now I know that the wooden sword was probably made to look like a Keyblade, but back then, I didn’t know anything about Keyblades, so I had no idea.

“Lea, we don’t have time for this.”

Nearby, Isa nagged me to hurry up.

“Lighten up, Isa. It’ll only take a sec.”

You've really been the kind of guy with no flexibility and no sense of fun since way back then, huh?

"You still play with toy swords? That's cute."

After I handed it to the golden-haired kid who seemed to be its owner, I took out my disks.

"Now this right here—tada! Whaddaya think?"

These bright red disks were my favorite.

"Not a whole lot."

"You're just jealous. I'm Lea," I quickly retorted, and then bent at the waist, pointing to my own head and bringing my face closer to his all at once.

"Got it memorized? What's your name?"

"Ventus."

"Okay, Ventus. Let's fight!"

That was when we first met. In the end, I lost. I mean, if I think about it objectively, there's no way I could've beaten a Keyblade wielder back then.

"I'll see ya when I see ya. After all, were friends now. Get it memorized."

And then we parted ways. Isa spoke to me in an exasperated tone.

"What is it with you and picking up stray puppies?"

"I want everybody I meet to remember me. Inside people's memories, I can live forever."

A wry smile appeared on Isa's face.

"I know I won't forget you. Believe me, I try all the time."

Back then, we didn't know that things could disappear from our memories. Memories are vague, and sometimes they're rewritten.

Since then, I haven't seen Ventus even once.

The setting sun was red again today. When my daily training was done, I always watched the sunset from the top of a hill in the Secret Forest.

"Bet you don't know why the sun sets red. You see, light is made up of lots of colors. And out of all those colors, red is the one that travels the farthest."

"Like I asked! Know-it-all."

## ***Xion's Story***

### ***Don't Forget Me***

The sunset is beautiful. The three of us loved watching the sunset like this. I always wondered why it was so beautiful. We ate sea salt ice cream and had silly conversations. It really was fun. That reminds me, the three of us promised we'd go see the ocean together sometime, didn't we? I wish we'd gone to see the ocean with Sora and the others.

I was in darkness, but it was a very comforting place. That's only natural, because it was inside Sora. But nothing was there, and I didn't even really exist. Because everyone had forgotten me. It's really sad to be forgotten. Because if you're forgotten, you have nothing.

But now I'm eating ice cream with the two of them again. It's because they—because everyone—gave it their all.

The truth is, I should never have existed. I was just a puppet. I can't even believe I'm smiling right now, but I'm really glad I am.

I remember telling Roxas this back then, at the top of the clock tower on day 255. But I just know there was something else important to me back then, and I can't remember what. I know I need to remember something, but I don't know what that something is.

The setting sun stung my eyes. Lately, I'd been just a bit of a crybaby. Could it be because the upside-down tears had disappeared from my face?

"Hey, Axel!"

I turned my head at the voice calling from behind me. Kairi was standing there in new clothes.

"Cut your hair, too."

"Mm-hmm. So, you gonna try yours on?"

"Uhh...I dunno. Maybe later."

After answering, I gazed at the sunset again.

"But you always wear the same thing."

It was true. I'd been wearing this black coat for a long time.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it. This is how you pick me out of a crowd. I make myself easy to remember."

"How thoughtful."

"Nah, not really..." Kairi's comment made me embarrassed, just a bit. She sat down next to me and watched the sunset.

"Our training's almost finished."

"Yeah..."

"Somewhere inside me is Naminé. If we can free Roxas, we can free her too."

"I guess so."

After that, we talked about all kinds of things. I even talked to her about Ventus. I'd never told anyone about him before. I was afraid if I did tell someone, I'd never see them again, just like Ventus. So I'd told no one.

"Oh yeah. He's got you very memorized."

Kairi jokingly mimicked my favorite pose. It made me laugh.

"Now that we're going back, I'm worried about everything."

"Well, you don't have to worry alone anymore, Axel."

The sun continued to set. Just like back then.

Thanks, you two. For remembering me—for never forgetting me.

I chose to go away because I couldn't just let Xemnas have his way. That's why I had no regrets. Now, I remember that I disappeared in Roxas's arms in front of this clock tower. And then Roxas went to sleep too, and only Axel was left. Axel really might have been the saddest one of all of us. Because he was the one who forgot the most. Forgetting and being forgotten are both sad.

I still worry a little about whether I should be here. I wonder just a little if I really shouldn't exist after all. But I'll be okay because the two of them are with me. It's fine for me to be here.

If the worst happens and I'm forgotten again someday, that still won't change the fact that I was here. So please, don't forget me.

Because I won't forget you.

## ***Jiminy Cricket's Story***

### ***Your Conscience***

Every once in a while my head, or somewhere in my clothes, or a weird part of me starts itching, and that's when Jiminy's moving around on me somewhere.

Usually he doesn't show up much, but Jiminy's an important friend who always travels with me and writes stuff down for me.

I would've never been able to remember to thank Naminé if Jiminy hadn't written it down. Come to think of it, even the things that happened in the Datascape—which I don't know much about—were thanks to Jiminy's Journal. I basically can't travel without him, but I sometimes forget about him because he's always hiding somewhere on me.

## ***Chip & Dale's Story***

### ***Chipmunk Engineers***

Chip's the one with the black nose. Dale's the one with the red nose.

They're different in a lot of other ways too, but I think it was Donald who taught me that that was the best way to tell them apart, since they look so much alike. Come to think of it, I figured Chip and Dale were brothers because of their similar looks, but they're actually just friends! They've known Donald and Goofy, and King Mickey, for a pretty long time. I hear they used to argue with Donald a lot, but I can't imagine that at all. Since the king was apparently pretty mischievous long ago, I wonder if that means Chip and Dale were too? Seems like Donald and Goofy were, at least.

## ***Merlin's Story***

### ***Merlin's Beard!***

Merlin can use magic to transcend time and space; he taught us about magic; he helped Kairi and Axel train as Keyblade wielders; he has Pooh's picture book; he sent us to the past, where the king and the others were; and he's friends with Yen Sid. Other than being an awesome old wizard, though, he's a total mystery to me.

"Would be, if it weren't for the old loon's magic."

"Old loon, you say?! Oh ho-ho-ho, I'll show you who's old!"

When we went to Tron's world, Merlin had an argument with Cid. He was suuuper mad, but that was the only time I've ever known him to be that way, and Cid was the one who called him an old loon in the first place.

## ***Ansem the Wise's Story***

### ***Peculiar Ansem Report***

"My efforts these many years have come to fruition, with the world I govern having become a paradise worthy of being called 'Radiant Garden.'"

How long ago was it that I wrote the report that began with those words? It seems like it was a very long time ago, yet it also seems like it was just yesterday. Now I stand once again with my apprentices in the laboratory of Radiant Garden. In those days, I couldn't have even imagined a future like this.

My past self believed that everything began from my mistakes. However, now I see that it was my own arrogance which caused me to believe this. I even hated my apprentices. That is why I vowed vengeance as "Darkness in Zero." I had

One time I asked him if he was sad about not being with Pinocchio, but he said, "You're as much of a handful as Pinocchio, and if I wasn't with you I'd be worried about you!"

"What do you mean, I'm like Pinocchio?!"

When I asked him that, he said, "You're about as bad at lying as he is." Then he laughed and disappeared somewhere on me again.

By the way, how does Jiminy's Journal work, anyway? I don't really understand what stuff like "digitized" means...I'll have to ask Jiminy about it sometime.

The chipmunks not only maintain the Gummi Ship; they also know a lot about computers. It's a relief knowing I can count on them to take care of transportation.

They've been in contact with Ienzo and doing all kinds of research that I don't understand at all. It's completely over my head! When I look at them, I feel like they and Ansem the Wise would have a lot to talk about. If they'd been in Radiant Garden, maybe they both would've become Organization members, too.

I wonder what kind of research they're doing now?

The other day when we were eating cake made by Little Chef, I tried asking him some questions, but...

"How old are you, Merlin?"

"Ho-ho-ho."

"What exactly are you, Merlin?"

"Ho-ho-ho."

"Where did you come from, Merlin?"

"Ho-ho-ho."

All Merlin did was laugh as he drank his tea, and he didn't answer any of my questions! How does he have so much power? I wonder if he'd tell me someday?

no intention of letting the darkness gnaw at me and consume my heart, but was my own pride a form of darkness as well?

Now I spend my days with a feeling of peace. However, I know that people—and the world—could easily be swallowed by the darkness at any time. I know now that darkness lies dormant in every place imaginable and that anyone has the potential to fall victim to it. However, even in the blackest darkness, light will never lose its radiance. Yes, just as this "Radiant Garden" has returned to the way it once was.

I cannot say whether this old fool has been forgiven. But I shall devote the rest of my life to atoning for what I've done.

## ***Naminé's Story***

### ***Another Dream***

"Besides Kairi and Riku, there was one other girl I was friends with. The four of us played together all the time."

This was a memory of Sora's that I made up. That scene comes to my mind.

The waves breaking on the shore. The white sand. Behind me, boys were fighting each other with sticks. I stood and began walking toward the bridge. Then, I sat at the edge of the bridge and gazed at the horizon. I closed my eyes. The only thing I could hear was the sound of the waves.

"What're you doing over here, Naminé?"

I turned toward the voice calling from behind me. Sora was standing there.

"The wind feels nice," I replied, looking at him.

"I wish I could ride the wind wherever it goes."

"This again?" I laughed. Sora and the others were building a raft. They planned to use it to go to the outside world.

"You ever want to go back?" Sora asked as he sat next to me.

Go back—where? Where would I want to go back to? The place I always wanted to return to was this sandy white beach. This place where I could always hear the sound of the waves. But the truth is—the real me...well, I guess I wanted to return to this beach too, didn't I?

"If there are any other worlds out there, I want to see 'em all!" Sora continued. That's right, Sora has already seen all

## ***Dilan's Story***

### ***Blooming Rose***

Nourished by pure water that is the source of all life, fragrant flowers bloom in profusion in this garden, which that person loved. The care of those flowers again became part of our daily routine as guards. When I gaze at them, I recall the red rose I tried to take away as a Nobody. That rose was a symbol of love, and also a curse. So perhaps love is a curse. In those days, I believed such ideas as "the power of love" were despicable.

Once, someone asked me about love. He was standing before that rose. The flower was the reason the Beast was cursed. Sometimes I wonder if, similarly, it was the reason I disappeared back then. My thoughts about Kingdom Hearts

## ***Aeleus's Story***

### ***Darkness Gives Birth***

It still feels somewhat hazy.

I'm not sure where I was wandering after I disappeared at Castle Oblivion. I planned to control the darkness, but was it rather the darkness that controlled me? When I fought Riku, I accepted my defeat and disappeared. Could it be that I was more fascinated by the darkness than by hearts?

Unlike Even and Dilan, whose condition was unstable after they woke up, I was fully conscious and had time to reflect. And because I'm still thinking about it, it's still somewhat hazy.

## ***Ienzo's Story***

### ***Memory of Childhood***

I wonder how many memories remain from the time when I was a child. I think about that when I reflect on hearts and memories. My childhood memories are extremely hazy.

kinds of worlds. And he's met a lot of people and made a lot of connections and memories. I knew just a little about the fragments of those memories.

"Hey, aren't you guys forgetting about me?"

I turned my head at the voice and saw Riku standing there. And Kairi was behind him. This was a fake memory of how the four of us played together all the time.

"So, I guess we're the only ones working on the raft."

Riku looked over his shoulder at her. There was a smile on her face, which looked just a little like mine.

This place was a special world. A world from which someone left on a trip a very long time ago. An important place within people's memories.

I really wish everyone could return to this place. So why aren't they able to?

Is what I see an illusion, or a dream?

Could this be the world I wished for? Or a world that someone else wished for? I don't know the answer.

I wonder what happened to that sketchbook I used to draw in.

I can hear the sound of the waves. The sound begins to sink into my memories. The only thing I can hear forever is the waves.

became an obsession and eventually led to my annihilation. In other words, they were like a curse. And excess emotional attachment itself is both love and a curse.

I placed my rough hand on the fragrant flowers. By all rights, all this hand knew how to do was grip a lance. The flowers simply bloomed there. They remained as they were, rather than being placed under a glass dome or the like.

Why hadn't we been able to choose to remain as we were? No matter how much I lament what has transpired, there's nothing I can do to change it.

Perhaps I remain as I am now merely because of love.

What in the world is darkness? It seems like I also wanted the power Riku had. I believed I could control that power. As a result, I was defeated and I disappeared.

Riku ended up embracing the darkness as I told him to, and he never fell into our hands. If I had that power, maybe this kind of thing wouldn't have happened.

This world is beautiful and tranquil. This is exactly the world I desired. However, in a sense, there was also tranquility within the darkness, wasn't there?

Maybe I'm unqualified to be an apprentice because I'm still swayed by thoughts like these.

"Ienzo, where are you? Answer me."

I remember Even well as he searched for me with a slightly shrill voice. Master Ansem was busy, so it was Even who

looked after me at the time. He often scolded me for walking around on my own, but I think he was showing me affection in his own way. He was very strict about studying, and he would severely rebuke me if I made a mistake in a simple calculation. In that respect, Master Ansem was the one who was always kind. He often bought me sea salt ice cream. He had a fondness for the sweet and salty treat, and he frequently let me have some too.

## ***Master Xehanort's Story***

### ***My Dear Friend***

This world is just too small.

I wanted to fly away from the world that was nothing but blue sea, blue sky, and white sand.

What led me to depart from my birthplace was guidance from the future. And on the way to him, I also came in contact with some amount of darkness. Darkness is nothing to fear if you learn to control it. That is what I believed.

During the period of time I spent training, I had a friend.

His name was Eraqus. He was a special Keyblade wielder, a descendant of the first generation of masters from the age of fairy tales. From the moment he was born, he was destined to become a Keyblade wielder. His situation differed from mine. I did not want to be someone who merely followed after him, but someone who could stand shoulder to shoulder with him.

We talked of many things as we sat on opposite sides of the game board.

Sometimes we spoke of our training itself, and sometimes of what we ought to be striving for.

"Have you heard of the ancient Keyblade War?"

I moved one of my pieces and took one of Eraqus's.

"Huh? Of course I have."

Eraqus, too, moved one of his pieces and took one of mine.

"Long ago, Keyblade wielders waged a war over the ownership of light."

I moved another piece. A game is about moving pieces, and the process is a cycle.

"Yeah, the Master's favorite story."

"I wonder what they planned on doing with Kingdom Hearts after...making it appear."

I tossed the question I had been pondering to Eraqus.

"Who knows? I don't get why anyone would initiate a war," he said. Perhaps it wasn't something one could understand. However, there are motives and justifications in war.

I continued my line of questioning.

"So...you know the 'Lost Masters'?"

"Who?"

Whether he had never heard of them or merely pretended to have never heard of them, Eraqus had immediately responded with a question of his own.

"They're the ones who started the Keyblade War."

"Never heard of 'em. Where'd you hear about that?"

After responding, he looked down at the board and pondered.

"Or...they're the ones for whom the war started," I continued. Indeed, the Keyblade War started for the benefit of the Lost Masters.

I candidly expressed the suspicion that came into my mind.

"You can drop the façade."

"Façade?"

"'On that land shall darkness prevail and light expire.' A prospective Keyblade Master should know this."

Come to think of it, I believe that Even often scolded Master Ansem. He said he spoiled me too much. In retrospect, it's possible he used me as an excuse to have ice cream.

My time in that radiant garden was beautiful and vivid, and I still have clear memories of it to this day. That's why I couldn't forgive the betrayal. But that betrayal was a fabrication.

Now, I simply live to make amends for what I've done.

"If you say so."

Eraqus merely shrugged at my words.

"The Gazing Eye sees the fate of the World. The future—it's already been written."

I gazed at the single Keyblade that hung on the wall. It was one of the oldest Keyblades passed down from Master to Master—a truly special Keyblade. From there, I began my journey alone to the other worlds with the aim of passing the Mark of Mastery exam. I learned much during my travels.

Decades passed, and I found that he and I had taken different paths.

"Wait, Xehanort."

He stopped me. Both of us were now in our old age.

"There is a reason the precepts bar us from such knowledge. Why do you seek the χ-blade? Would you blanket all the worlds in darkness, reduce them to nothing?!"

We had long since become Keyblade Masters, and he protected this land. It was the duty of a Keyblade Master to protect it. Certain mechanisms had been devised by successive generations of Masters to prevent the misuse of this place, where light and darkness existed in balance. In short, it was he, not I, who was the rightful Keyblade Master defending this land.

I spoke to him as he followed me.

"But darkness did cover the world once, in legend. We know so little about the Keyblade War—only that it was just the beginning. Amidst that crisis a precious light was found. It is a curious tale—and one worth exploring. They say ruin brings about creation. So what, then, would another Keyblade War bring? When the darkness falls, will we be found worthy of the precious light the legend speaks of? I must have these answers."

I looked back at Eraqus.

"The χ-blade needs to be forged, and with it, the door to the Keyblade War unlocked!"

This was the answer I had found at the end of my long journey.

"Fool...You would risk an apocalypse out of sheer curiosity. I will never allow it, Xehanort. Not while I live!"

What Eraqus said was likely correct. However, there are many correct answers in this world. It is foolish to believe that only one exists.

I continued, "But once again you have it all wrong, Eraqus. Darkness is a beginning, you see, not an end. At birth, every one of us emerges from darkness into a world of light, do we not?"

"Poetic excuses!"

Because darkness exists, the light shines, and the light in turn casts shadows.

I turned my back to Eraqus and began walking.

"If words won't dissuade you, only one thing will."

His Keyblade appeared in his hand and he charged at me. I turned around and sent a single attack at him, which glanced

off his face. He avoided a direct blow; perhaps I should have expected no less from the man I called a friend.

Eraqus shook as he crouched on the ground and held his face.

“That power...Has the darkness taken you, Xehanort?”

“Not your concern.”

I turned my back on Eraqus and departed from that land.

I stood on the beach of my birthplace. After the sun set, nothing could be heard on this island except the sound of the waves. I once began a journey from this world. And now I had returned here, bringing a boy with me. I wonder why I chose this place. The boy had opted for his heart to be fractured rather than for it to be tainted by darkness, and I thought I would at least allow him to expire peacefully. Perhaps it was because I still harbored in my heart the smallest amount of nostalgia for my birthplace.

## ***Young Xehanort’s Story***

### ***Transcending Time***

I think the first time I saw that guy was in Traverse Town, in a dream.

“He’s right inside this projection, in another imagining of this world.”

Joshua said this and showed me the projection of Traverse Town where Riku was. That’s where I saw the guy.

“As for how the world got split in two...I have a feeling you’ll need to ask this guy.”

A man in a black coat faced Riku. It was the type of coat worn by members of Organization XIII. He slowly removed the hood of the coat, revealing a young guy with silver hair. At the time, I had a feeling I knew him, even though I was sure I’d never seen him or met him before.

The next time we met was in the World That Never Was.

“Come with me.”

One of the bolts that Xigbar fired transformed into this guy, who held a hand out to me. I was already supposed to be in a

## ***Terra-Xehanort’s Story***

### ***Golden Eyes***

Kingdom Hearts floated in the sky.

The location was the Badlands, not far from the Keyblade Graveyard. Terra faced Master Xehanort and assumed a stance with his Keyblade. He breathed heavily, his expression impatient.

“Admirably done. I knew this was a journey you could make—over the unseen wall that divides darkness and light. And I was not wrong, Terra!”

From the very beginning, Master Xehanort had a single goal: to cast away his aged body and take Terra’s as his vessel.

“Yes...You are indeed strong. The darkness is nothing to fear.”

Master Xehanort had once called out to Terra after his Mark of Mastery exam and said this. It was merely planting a seed. However, now that seed had grown into a bud and was about to blossom.

Keyblade in hand, Terra rushed at Master Xehanort. But before he could reach him, Vanitas blocked his way. Terra crossed Keyblades with Vanitas.

However, when I returned to this island, the boy I thought would never wake up again—Ventus—pointed his Keyblade to the sky. His heart I had assumed was fractured was, in fact, not fractured.

There was no longer any darkness within it. That darkness now belonged to another boy. If this was the case, then had I not come into possession of a boy with a heart of pure light and a boy with a heart of pure darkness? It was as though someone were guiding me.

The light within Ventus was still sleeping. Believing that the best way to awaken it was to leave it in the care of a powerful light, I decided to make use of my old friend.

I went to visit Eraqus.

All of this was to bring forth the χ-blade. And to see with my own eyes what lay beyond the Keyblade War.

dream, but I passed out...and then I woke up in Destiny Islands.

“Yes. This was where it started.”

He was next to me as I sat up on the sand. And he was also in front of us. A man in a brown robe stood next to the guy at the edge of the water.

“At this point, I still had no idea that I was talking to myself. He cast away his bodily form just to set me on the appointed path.”

“What do you mean?”

I didn’t get what this guy was saying at all.

“That is Xehanort reduced to just a heart—the being you and your friends called Ansem.”

Then I passed out again and had a dream.

That man always tells me things I don’t really understand. He talks to me with a look on his face that makes it seem like he completely understands everything. What the heck does he know?

“Yes, feed your anger, Terra. You see how powerless you are to save them? Savor that rage and despair. Let it empower you!”

As Xehanort shouted this, a smile appeared on his face.

Yes, it would happen very soon—just a little longer. The time was now.

“Let your whole heart blacken with anger!”

Master Xehanort pushed his Keyblade into his own chest. Light began to overflow from his chest.

“At last, our moment is here. Out with the old and brittle vessel, and in with a younger, stronger new one! I swore I would survive...and be there to see what awaited beyond the Keyblade War! And now it is your darkness that shall be the ark that sustains me!”

Terra instantaneously engaged his armor, but it was already too late. The armor fell to the ground as though it had been broken, and only Terra himself looked up.

His hair color had completely changed to silver, and his eyes shone golden. That was the moment Master Xehanort brought Terra’s body under his control.

“This heart belongs again to darkness. All worlds begin in darkness, and all so end. The heart is no different. Darkness

sprouts within it—it grows, consumes it. Such is its nature. In the end, every heart returns to the darkness whence it came.”

Terra-Xehanort began to walk. However, objects resembling chains surrounded the area like a cage.

“What?”

Terra-Xehanort whirled around and saw the armor that ought to have lost its owner assembled again, Keyblade at the ready.

“Your body submits, your heart succumbs—so why does your mind resist?” Terra-Xehanort shouted. The armor—Terra’s will resisted fiercely, and a violent baffle unfolded. In

## **Ansem’s Story**

### **Dark Anthem**

“Ones born of the heart and darkness, devoid of hearts, ravage all worlds and bring desolation.”

In the heart of darkness that engulfed worlds, these words discovered on a computer in the World Terminus were probably left by Ansem. But they didn’t make any sense at all. The only thing I understood about the writing Ansem left—including Ansem’s reports—is that they were about nothing good. I didn’t know if Ansem wrote this in the first place, and I found out later a different person actually wrote it, but either way, it was full of stuff I didn’t get. In the first place, Ansem was really Xehanort’s Heartless! And Xehanort took Terra’s body! Anyway, at that point there were a lot of things I didn’t get.

From there, we headed into the heart of darkness and opened the last door. There, the ocean of Destiny Islands stretched out in front of us.

“This world has been connected.”

The voice of Ansem came from somewhere, and the island disappeared. We gasped.

“Tied to the darkness...Soon to be completely eclipsed. There is so very much to learn. You understand so little. A meaningless effort. One who knows nothing can understand nothing.”

That’s when I remembered something. The words of that man I met right before I left this island. He said the exact same things Ansem just did. That guy was Ansem!

I said this to him back then:

“Oh, yeah? Well, you’ll see.”

Yeah, there are lots of things I don’t get, but I’ve learned a lot.

The beach collapsed right in front of me, and all sorts of things melted into the darkness. And then, there was Riku, standing with his back to me. Riku, whose body had been taken over by Ansem. Riku turned, and he changed into Ansem. And then he said this:

## **Xemnas’s Story**

### **Nobody Knows**

Xemnas always seemed to be trying to lure us into doing something. When that guy appeared, it always sorta felt like I was watching someone acting in a play. I wonder if it’s because he didn’t have a heart.

That was back when Radiant Garden was still called Hollow Bastion. We were fighting the Nobodies that attacked the town.

Six people in black coats appeared in front of us. They were members of the Organization. Each of their faces was totally hidden by a hood.

the end, it defeated Terra-Xehanort. Almost simultaneously, an explosion like a violent rush of light and darkness engulfed the armor and Terra-Xehanort, and all that remained in the Badlands was the single suit of armor.

And Terra-Xehanort stood alone in Radiant Garden.

*Who...am I?*

“Terra?” Aqua’s voice called out to him. However, ironically, that voice awakened Xehanort.

“Terra’s heart has been extinguished—smothered by the darkness within him.”

Terra-Xehanort’s eyes shone golden.

“Darkness is the heart’s true essence.”

“That’s not true!” I replied. That was something I’d learned on my journey.

“The heart may be weak. And sometimes it may even give in. But I’ve learned that deep down, there’s a light that never goes out!”

And then I took my Keyblade and challenged Ansem.

But the island disappeared, and pitch-black clouds covered the sky.

“Behold the endless abyss! Within it lies the heart of all worlds: Kingdom Hearts!”

Ansem’s voice echoed in the darkness.

“Look as hard as you are able. You’ll not find even the smallest glimmer of light. From those dark depths are all hearts born. Even yours. Darkness conquers all worlds!”

In the middle of the darkness, when I didn’t know what to do, I heard Riku’s voice.

“Giving up already? Come on, Sora. I thought you were stronger than that.”

And then I fought Ansem, who had become like a monster, and beat him.

“It is futile. The Keyblade alone cannot seal the door to darkness. Kingdom Hearts! Fill me with the power of darkness...Supreme darkness...”

A large door appeared behind Ansem.

“You’re wrong. I know now, without a doubt, Kingdom Hearts...is light!” I shouted, facing the door. And then light poured out of the door and surrounded Ansem.

“Light...But...Why...”

I watched Ansem’s body disappear into the light.

That’s a memory from my very first journey. What I learned during that journey will never be shaken.

No matter how deep the darkness, a light shines within. I know now, without a doubt, Kingdom Hearts...is light.

And it was also in Hollow Bastion that I saw Xemnas’s face for the first time. He appeared in front of us while we were fighting a swarm of Nobodies.

He slowly removed his hood and turned his head toward us. The man had silver hair and was looking down at us.

“It’s the guy who’s not Ansem!”

“You mean it’s his Nobody!”

“The leader of Organization XIII...”

Donald, Goofy, and I all exclaimed in turn. And last, but not least, King Mickey cried out too.

“Wait a minute. Now I know! Now I remember! Xehanort! Ansem’s apprentice!”

It seemed like that was when the king realized it. The true identity of the man who called himself Ansem.

We shouted the man’s name.

“Xehanort!”

“How long has it been since I abandoned that name…”

It sounded as though he was talking to himself.

“Out with it, Nobody! Where’s Kairi? Where’s Riku?!” I shouted with my Keyblade in hand.

“I know nothing of any Kairi. As for Riku…Perhaps you should ask your king.”

That’s all he said, and then the guy vanished. There were now a lot of things we didn’t understand. And then Axel appeared in front of us.

“Way to fall right into their trap.”

We reflexively braced for a fight against Axel, who wore a black coat.

“C’mon, it’s a setup by Organization XIII. Xemnas is using you to destroy the Heartless—that’s his big master plan.”

“Xemnas?”

“The guy you just saw. He’s their leader. Got it memorized? X-E-M, N-A-S.”

That was the moment we first heard the guy’s name.

And in the end, we confronted Xemnas in the World That Never Was. We’d just prevented Kingdom Hearts from being completed.

## ***Vanitas’s Story***

### ***Vanish into the Blue***

Empty creature from Ventus riven…

To you, the name Vanitas shall be given.

What do you think I am to you? Who do you think I am? I’m the darkness, and that’s why you can all exist as light. Isn’t that right? And I’m both you, and not you. Bet you never imagined you had darkness within you, huh? But darkness is everywhere. Look, it’s even right there at your feet. Your shadow. The stronger the light, the blacker its shadow becomes. And that shadow lurks at your feet.

Right after I separated from you, I was left standing alone in the Badlands. In that place near the Keyblade Graveyard, there were faint traces of a battle.

Right from the moment we separated, I knew how I came to exist. Because I was a mass of darkness from a heart—a vessel for negative emotions.

In the Badlands with its fiercely blowing wind, I clenched my fists and closed my eyes at that feeling resembling pain. Then a black shadow emerged from behind me. When I looked up, the shadow’s red eyes glowed, and it turned into a monster.

I stretched my hand toward it, and the monster pranced around me like a playful kitten. I swung my Keyblade down at the being—an Unversed—that had just been born and was like me. The Unversed vanished without a word.

## ***Xigbar’s Story***

### ***The Fool***

Once upon a time…

People lived in peace, bathed in the warmth of light. But one day, they began to fight over the light, and in the end,

“Ohh…my Kingdom Hearts…ruined. Now I’ll have to start all over again.”

Xemnas sounded like he was talking to himself, as usual.

“Warriors of the Keyblade! Go forth, and bring me more hearts!”

“No!”

Riku, King Mickey, and I all shouted this as we pointed our Keyblades at Xemnas. He shrugged and didn’t seem upset.

“You accept darkness, yet choose to live in the light. So why is it that you loathe us who teeter on the edge of nothing?”

“That’s simple. It’s because you mess up our worlds,” Riku answered plainly.

“That may be…However, what other choice might we have had?”

Xemnas looked sad. But the guy didn’t have a heart. So…

“Just give it a rest! Xemnas! You don’t even exist! You’re not sad about anything!”

I shouted, and Xemnas laughed.

“Very good. You don’t miss a thing. I cannot feel—sorrow…No matter what misery befalls the worlds. No matter what you think, what you feel, or how you exist.”

Xemnas raised his hands toward the sky. A countless number of lights—hearts scattered throughout the worlds—ascended to the sky.

It was so bright, I had to close my eyes.

And then we challenged Xemnas to a final battle.

Unversed—meaning ones who aren’t well versed in life. What the heck does that actually mean? Whether there’s a meaning to it or not has nothing to do with me. This monster was both me and not me. Hey, isn’t that like me and you? I don’t care which one is the real deal.

I wonder how much negative emotion there is in this world. If you think anger and hatred are the only negative emotions out there, you’re wrong. There’s sadness, loneliness, uneasiness, jealousy, anger. But they all feed into hatred.

Feel hate. Feel anger. Why not hate your own existence, too, while you’re at it? You experienced it too, didn’t you? You hated yourself. I hated you—Ventus. And I tried to absorb you and then disappeared for a while.

Was it you I hated? Or maybe it was me? It doesn’t matter anymore.

And I disappeared once, but now I’m back, being used by someone again. Seems like just forcing me to exist wasn’t enough for Xehanort. I hate Xehanort, I hate Ventus, I hate all the rest of you, I hate the whole world, and now I’m disappearing again. That’s how I chose to live.

I don’t need to know which is light and which is darkness. Not just light, not just darkness. We decide what we are. I lived on my own terms.

I came from the void and am returning to it.

What’s the void? It’s neither darkness nor light, more like an abyss. Good night, Ventus.

everything returned to the void from whence it came. However…



No one knows how long ago this took place. It might be happening at this very moment, or it might have happened a very long time ago.

Your expression tells me you have no idea what I'm talking about. Yes, it's fine if you don't know yet. It's fine if you do, too, though.

You do realize that judging something by its shape or appearance is the height of stupidity, right? Take a box, for example. Is a black box really black? What shade of black? Is it actually black, in the end? The dimwitted ones are simply looking for a black box. So they don't even know what kind of box it really is or what's in it. There's a big difference between "knowing" and "understanding."

Now, as for that box, do you want to know why it's gone? You want to ask something? But there are limits to what I can say right now. It's that difference between knowing and understanding. And, of course, there's the possibility of secrets that no one knows, like the contents of the box. You could say it's a surprise.

Say, if someone told you the world would end tomorrow, what would you do? Would you think there's nothing you can do about it, or would you try to do something about it? Remember what I said about that black box. No one knows what shade of black it is. Anyway, what does the "end of the world" even mean? No one knows what will happen.

Remember when that guy called Xemnas opened the door to the Kingdom Hearts of this world? When and where exactly was that? How long have you believed that time has passed since then? Does time even pass in the first place?

Ah, your face says you don't believe me.

But how else do you explain it?

And just as I always have, I'll be watching over all of you—er, over the Keyblades. My role is that of a fool who tries to get the power of the Keyblade for himself.

We're in Olympus. It's a world where some brave guy is always telling Sora what it means to be a hero.

What a hero is varies depending on the world and time period. Just like how each Keyblade wielder is different.

So, what kind of Keyblade wielder are you, Sora?

"All this altruism is giving me the warm and fuzzies. So then, does having a heart of light come with an extremely good insurance policy?"

"Just say what you mean." Sora glared at me.

## ***Vexen's Story***

### ***Flowers for Intelligence***

What do you think true intelligence is?

After making so many puppets, I believed I understood the heart to an extent. I understood—or rather, I knew—it was something I couldn't understand. Moreover, I thought about intelligence a great deal. It's not unreasonable to think of a heart as intellect itself. For example, suppose that you instilled a high level of intellect in a wild animal. Is what the animal felt after it acquired intelligence the same as what it felt beforehand? Or would it really be different? If what we feel is different due to our intellect, does that not mean the heart is closely related to intellect? That is the first conclusion I drew.

We have made it possible to put hearts within puppets. We can surely infuse them with as much intellect as we desire. However, I have a feeling that that isn't true intelligence. No, perhaps I should say that I understood this when I saw the ones who were connected to the hero of the Keyblade. Maybe this, too, is something I merely think I understand.

"Oh, but I did though. No good will ever come from putting other people first."

Next to him, the hero Hercules also spoke up.

"I was able to save Meg's life because I was ready to risk my own."

"Because you've got friends in high places, you mean. Tricks like that don't fly for your average Joe."

I laughed scornfully at the two of them.

"What do you know? You weren't even there! If you were, you'd admire Herc's courage."

As he said this, Sora's eyes had a light in them as usual. I always thought he had a good eye.

"I don't admire one guy leaping into danger if it means someone else might have to jump in to save him. You're all just lining up to lose out. Dooming others to take the fall with ya."

Do I have to spell it out for you to get what I mean? It doesn't matter if you don't get it at all, but I want you to experience it just a little. A heart guided by a Keyblade. More people than I can possibly count have disappeared due to self-sacrifice.

"Oh, and you can spare me the usual party line. Yes, hearts are powerful when they're connected. But if you put too much of that power in one place, some of those hearts might end up breaking."

As always, I said exactly what I wanted to say, and I turned my back to Sora. Ah, but maybe that wasn't enough. Since I was the fool who wanted a Keyblade.

"Still, Sora, that doesn't mean you should change. Accept the power you're given. Find the hearts joined to yours."

In a sense, I was doing the same thing. A heart that connects and a heart that guides—two that are alike but different.

"Why would I ever take advice from you?"

"As if! You don't have any choice but to follow this sweet little trail of bread crumbs. And at the end, you'll finally realize what destiny has in store for you. In fact, your reward might be right around the corner. You're so close!"

Saying no more, I disappeared from Sora's sight.

Yes, his goal should be right around the corner. I'll soon reunite with my former comrades, and with that, my role will be fulfilled.

May your heart be your guiding key...

The hero of the Keyblade sometimes acts in ways that seem foolish. Is that foolishness truly the opposite of intelligence? To me, that didn't seem to be the case. Sometimes a foolish action causes the best possible outcome. I began to think that, if this is true, intelligence is merely make-believe, and fools are truly the wise ones.

In that case, perhaps intelligence, like the heart, is something that cannot be understood. Or perhaps the act of quantifying it is meaningless in and of itself. That is the conclusion I drew as a researcher.

Leaving that aside, I am now about to choose the most foolish person among the original thirteen. In reality, it is not I who did the choosing; however, I agreed with the assessment, so it amounts to the same thing. I have come to the conclusion that the person who appears the most foolish is actually the smartest. I owe this conclusion to the hero of the Keyblade. The boy in question would most likely be angry if I said this to him, but it is the truth, so there's nothing for it.

I'm sorry to say that I was mistaken all along. What I thought was intelligence was, in reality, foolishness and stupidity beyond all else. I had lost sight of why I wanted to be clever in the first place. I wanted to be clever because I wanted to be helpful to someone. Before I knew it, I had begun to pursue only intelligence—only research findings. And I feel compelled to say that that was dearly foolish. Additionally, according to this theory, I could be considered to be the most foolish person of all. No, the real fools are the more intelligent ones who put many layers of a scheme in place—those who want others to think they are clever.

And the plans of the intelligent ones come to nothing due to the actions of the seemingly foolish.

That is why I'm alive today.

This is atonement.

Men like us—in the pursuit of science, we sometimes make terrible mistakes. Lose sight of our mission to help people.

## **Saïx's Story**

### ***Say What You Will***

What is a heart, ultimately?

What does it mean to be a friend?

Do connections between hearts have meaning?

Maybe, to me, it has meaning to feel that the time I spend here like this is precious. The time spent simply watching the setting sun and eating ice cream is so peaceful and wonderful.

What is the Organization, what is a heart? Hey, you, sitting next to me. What do you think? I've never asked you, but I can just imagine it. Imagining it gives me a slightly painful yet warm feeling, but I suppose all the heroes of the Keyblade were right after all.

It's as if there's sweetness and saltiness inside my chest, like the flavor of sea salt ice cream.

Preparing the puppets was meant to help us atone, but I don't even know who I wanted to make amends to. Maybe I wanted to make amends to the person I used to be. Back then, we believed we could do anything. We thought we could rescue that girl together. I don't know how things ended up like they did.

You used to be a crybaby. Before I knew it, the marks under your eyes that stopped you from crying disappeared, and you began to make friends other than me and laughed with them.

## **Demyx's Story**

### ***A Tweet of a Substitute***

Why am I in the Organization, you ask? Well, you know, it's a long story...oh, yeah, maybe I wanted friends? Ehhhh, well, I know it's kinda uncool, but now that I think about it, yeah, maybe that really is why.

Except for the old guy's bunch, a lot of people have a good buddy in the Organization. Like Axel and Saïx, or Marluxia and Larxene, or Zexion and Vexen, or Xaldin and Lexaeus? A lot of 'em ended up being part Xehanort, though.

Yeah, so it doesn't really mean much, and that's that. I'm not cut out for fighting. It's more fun to play my sitar. I don't

## **Luxord's Story**

### ***Tumbling Dice***

I wonder, do you know the sure-fire way to win a wager?

In the first place, there's no wager for any game that you know you'll win for certain. If you know you're going to win,

But now I can help someone with my research. Now, I can atone.

"Yes! Demyx time," the fool said. The most important thing to him was to not be a benchwarmer for someone else. The job I gave him seemed to be perfect for him.

Yes, that is unmistakably intelligence. Being honest with oneself and never losing sight of oneself. Things that were once impossible for me.

Even now, it makes no difference to me if I'm a benchwarmer for someone else. As long as I think that way, surely I will never reach the level of intelligence of the fool in front of me.

I deeply hope that this plan will outsmart the intelligent one and succeed.

It is all for the sake of atonement.

Ultimately, I was just being obstinate. I was a fool who was being used.

Even so, in some respects, I always believed in you. So now we're here, side by side, watching the sunset and eating sea salt ice cream.

In the end, you're still a crybaby, but you don't need those upside-down tear marks anymore. Just like you don't need me anymore. Yes, I thought I wasn't someone you wanted around any longer. That's why I sacrificed myself for that man. If you don't need me anymore, then there's nothing left for me. But in reality, I was wrong. It wasn't about needing or not needing. If just our hearts are connected, that's all that matters.

Roxas and Xion laugh next to us, and the children from Twilight Town have joined us as well, so it's just a little noisy here. Normally, you would be noisy, too, but you're simply watching them fondly. The gaze you're sending their way is kind and warm. Next to you, I eat the sweet and salty ice cream. It tastes the same as it did back in Radiant Garden when we were young. I never imagined a future like this, sitting side by side and eating ice cream.

Being the crybaby is supposed to be your specialty. And yet...

The sunset stings my eyes.

really wanna do anything that's tough or painful, you know? Well, sometimes you gotta do stuff like that to stay alive, but I wanna have a fun life if I can. It is what it is.

I never thought Vexen of all people would ask me to do something, and I hate doing stuff that's a pain, but it seemed like it would be more of a pain not to do it.

In that case, aren't I more cut out for lugging stuff around?

Oh yeah, what is it that person used to say all the time? Something about a guiding key?

Come to think of it, wasn't something guiding me?

there's no need to make a bet, is there? I'm always thinking about the likelihood of losing. That's what being a true gambler is.

But then, when you reach a certain level of power, not losing in a big way—stepping down from the game—also becomes an important part of gambling. A game is not just one match. It's a series of battles, and only the final victory or defeat determines the outcome of your wager. Therefore, even if you lose today, it's not a complete loss. In this life, you just have to win the final bout.

And the strongest gamblers don't bet at all. Some might say it's because they're already wagering their lives—and those types have considerable influence. Most likely because

## ***Marluxia's Story***

### ***Ephemeral Flower***

I know who I am and my purpose for being.

Once, I was anxious because I had even forgotten my own name. I was like Roxas when he first joined the Organization. However, I was powerful.

And ironically, I was put in charge of that castle that governs memories. I understood that when a person loses their body and becomes a Nobody, they might also lose their memory. For that reason, I helped with the research of memories. That was also for the purpose of regaining my own lost memories. Memories govern the heart, and the heart is made of them. A heart without memories is merely a husk. If you rearrange a person's chain of memories, you can manipulate them however you like.

Was it by someone's design that I, with no memories, became the head of Castle Oblivion? Who on earth was it? Well, I suppose there's no point in wondering that now.

In the end, I couldn't obey Xemnas. Why, I don't know. As I pretended to obey, I was constantly thinking about betrayal. Perhaps that was something left within me from when I had a heart. Or perhaps it was a key that led me to my heart. I have no idea.

It wasn't until much later that I learned the castle was a special place. Castle Oblivion is a sealed ground—a place where a hero of the Keyblade slept. Where he was sleeping.

"Soon the emptiness will shatter your heart—here in this world of nothingness!" I declared, facing the hero of the Keyblade. Although his memories had been manipulated, he still stood against me.

"You fools—you can never understand our agony...!"

Defeated by the hero once, I became a vessel for that old man and met the hero again.

However, I was destined to disappear again. The next time I awoke, I was no longer a Nobody.

"Oh...So, now it all comes back to me."

I began to laugh in self-derision.

"Hey. Is that a real laugh?"

## ***Larxene's Story***

### ***Wise Up, Girl!***

I'm gonna hide my true goal to the very end.

What, are you saying I'm being too secretive? Well, what did you expect? I didn't have a heart. Those guys said a lot of things about hearts, but honestly, none of that stuff matters to me.

But yeah, a heart by nature is ambiguous. That research was fishy from the start! I don't understand people who study hearts. I can't stand that guy in the lab coat who goes blah, blah, blah about stuff. I'm not too fond of the one who sees me as inferior, either. And what's up with the guy hiding one eye? Not a fan. After all, people say the eyes say more than the mouth. And then that musclehead! I can't stand him,

they're not truly playing the game. I recommend that you never play a game against such an opponent. Of course, the true thrill of strategy is that you can sometimes beat those types of people, but I'm not sure I could say I've done it much, especially these days.

I have no intention of playing a do-or-die game where the result can be decided with a single significant move, but it would be nice if I could have a steady series of small wins.

Now then, what, and against whom, shall I wager today?

"Yes...My heart is remembering how to feel."

As I answered the hero's question, I placed a hand on my chest.

"Really? That's good."

"And now, I am on the cusp of reclaiming my identity...My purpose for being...Thanks to you, Sora."

And I regained both my heart and my memories. When was it that Larxene said this? The heart is an inconvenience. Because the occupants of my heart now are dark thoughts, sadness, pain, hatred—no, that's not all. Even love is coming back to life in my heart. But I know that, because of love, hatred also exists in people's hearts—and in mine, now that I'm human again. Darkness is something that's close to light.

If there are people who have full clarity of the world, could even they have predicted a future like this? There's no way I could accept such a future. I couldn't accept the future at all. Maybe that's why I became a Nobody, or maybe that isn't why.

From here on out, what am I supposed to do? What should I do? Where should I go now that I'm human again?

Is that, too, a future that's already been decided? I don't have the answer.

As always, there are so many things I don't know. However, the one thing I do know is the name of that small flower.

A weak heart which turns its back on the truth...Perhaps it was I who bound my heart in a chain of memories and cast away its freedom.

And for me, to find is to lose, and to lose is to find.

Lose what? Memories? Or something else? I don't even know that. But it doesn't matter if I don't. I found, and what I found was my memories. And I regained this gloomy feeling.

I myself was drowning in the ever-blooming darkness as lightless oblivion devoured me.

But no longer.

either! And facial hair just makes me shudder. Speaking of facial hair, I don't really like the guy that cheats, I don't like the one that spins his lances around and doesn't say much, and I definitely hate the instrument-playing guy.

Huh? Yeah, sure, I've been talking about what I hate, but...aren't liking and hating two sides of the same coin? Hey, I said something deep. Yeah, maybe it's true. What I like...let's see, what I like is...No, actually, there's nothing I like. I hate everything. Don't misunderstand one and think I have particular feelings about something just because I hate it. I always work for me, and I don't want to be taken advantage of by anyone, thank you very much.

Ahh, it's easier to have no heart, isn't it? It means I don't have to like or dislike anyone in particular.

It's painful to really like something. That's exactly why I can exploit feelings like that. For example, you'd hate it if you couldn't have your favorite ice cream anymore, right? So isn't it better to not like it?

The thing I hate the most is losing. And getting tricked. And not knowing something.

Ughhh, I hate that I'm human again. If I'd known this would happen, I wouldn't have followed that guy. Because now I don't have the excuse that I have no heart.

## ***Riku Replica's Story*** ***Hole in My Heart***

I wanted to become you.

I was jealous of you.

Who was I? Did I really exist? I'm a puppet who was made with fake memories planted in me; did I ever have a heart?

I was a sham, a fake. Everything about me was an imitation. What did I need to do to become real? Or maybe I was the real version of a fake?

That time when I was supposed to have dissolved and disappeared into the darkness, I was instead wandering around the Realm of Darkness. In that world where I could see nothing and hear nothing, a faint light came into view. I don't really remember what happened after I discovered the light.

And then I appeared in front of them again. But I knew that someday I would end up wandering in the darkness once more. If I said I wanted to see the light again in spite of that, I wonder if she would laugh at me?

What was it that I, supposed to be just a puppet, obtained in that castle where you forget everything? Fake memories—in other words, a fake heart? But that fake heart believed in a single light.

I can't even remember the name of that girl who was drawing in a sketchbook in a white room. Even so, I fought

## ***Maleficent's Story*** ***Dark Deed***

It wasn't long ago that I, Maleficent, took possession of this world. The seeds I sowed sixteen years ago bore fruit. It was a curse I placed on Aurora the day the girl was born in this world, Enchanted Dominion.

*Before the sun sets on her sixteenth birthday, she shall prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel and die.*

The curse was fulfilled, the people in the castle fell asleep, and even the prince with the power to break the curse had fallen into my hands. There weren't supposed to be any other threats to me besides those three fairies.

Deep within a castle surrounded by thorns, in a room no one was supposed to enter, I listened to the words of an old man I didn't know.

Beings of the dark are sensitive to darkness. Because he was such a person, it didn't matter whether he was an enemy or an ally. There is no need to judge someone other than by their loyalty to the darkness. If our interests aligned, we ought to work together, and if our interests someday no longer aligned, we would simply be enemies.

I pondered.

I had a vague sense that there were worlds beyond this place. This world was small. Why would I hesitate in making

An excuse for what? That's a secret, duh! Why do I have to tell you about something precious in my heart?

Our most precious memories lie deep within our hearts. I'm not gonna go forgetting them, though.

Since my heart has come back, the precious thing inside it has, too. But it's not something I like or hate. It's something I cherish. I'm not gonna tell anyone about it. 'Cause I hate people who talk too much, too.

That's why it's my precious secret, and mine alone!

Got that? Seee-cret!

for her in that castle. And now—who or what did I fight for? I wasn't able to see her again. I wonder where she went?

I wanted to see her. But I couldn't. Instead, I met many lights. And then, I met him. That guy—the real version of me—isn't someone I have to eliminate anymore. He's a friend. The proof that the feelings lighting this impostor's heart are very warm.

I'm going to disappear—I need to. Even if I dissolve into darkness, I'll remain among them, and my body will become a vessel for another heart. I'm glad that heart is hers. By me doing this, I'm sure nobody will forget me now.

I have nothing but fake memories, and someone will treasure this vessel more than I did. I'm going to disappear, but something of me will be left behind, so it's okay. I'll be a vessel for her precious memories.

I'm going to disappear.

This time, I'll return to your heart. As memories.

And then maybe you'll see her again, and my memories will be unraveled once and become yours.

That girl is dear to me.

I hope you'll look after her for me.

With this, I'll finally be myself.

Nobody else but me.

not only this one, but all the worlds my own? If I had the means, then I should use them.

I gathered the seven hearts of light, the worlds would be mine.

Of course, the old man probably had a goal of his own. I knew full well that a trap always lay within flattery. There should be many ways to escape from that trap after I step into it.

Those who believe in such things as love should wallow in the power of evil and fall into darkness. I sensed that another stranger had arrived in this world at the same time as the old man's visit.

Just by his presence alone, I could tell he had come from the outside world like the old man.

At that point, I was unaware that we would become longtime acquaintances.

After some time passed, I stood next to a boy. The name of this place was Traverse Town. It was a small town built in the Realm Between. Lights cut through the gloom in that place, and people lived there. It seemed that humans were the type of creatures to have some amount of hope as long as they were alive.

However, the boy next to me was different. I chuckled to myself, knowing that what occupied the boy's heart now was likely jealousy.

He was watching his onetime friend talking with new friends in a bright room.

"You see? It's just as I told you."

The boy simply gazed through the bright window.

"While you toiled away trying to find your dear friend, he quite simply replaced you with some new companions. Evidently, now he values them far more than he does you."

The boy's name was Riku. He was the one I was concerned about now. He possessed the power to influence this world. And if I perceived correctly, the power of darkness dwelled in his heart. If I influenced his heart just a bit, he would most likely fall into darkness.

I brought my face close to Riku, put my hand on his shoulder, and spoke kindly.

"You're better off without that wretched boy. Now, think no more of him and come with me. I'll help you find what you're searching for..."

Riku shook off my hand, turned his back on the window, and began walking.

Yes, good—that's how you grow up. Along with the power of darkness.

"Now, I'll grant you a marvelous gift. The power to control the Heartless."

I said this to Riku after he found Kairi on Captain Hook's pirate ship.

He easily believed the lie that a way to get Kairi's heart back would be found if he gathered the Seven Princesses. He also seemed to be annoyed at his former best friend for not trying to find Kairi.

Darkness was taking root in Riku's body—and his heart.

He was falling into darkness, as I predicted. It was as easy as twisting an infant's arm.

However, by his hand, I disappeared from the world for a time.

"Remember, relying too heavily on the dark powers could cost you your heart."

I often said this to Riku. It was an unbelievable course of events when Riku thrust his Keyblade into my chest.

## ***Pete's Story***

### ***Villain among Villains***

"Hey, you! Seen any bad guys around here?"

Unbelievably, Pete asked us this, and of course we pointed to him in response. I mean, it had to be Pete who was doing bad stuff. But in that world—a mysterious black-and-white place called Timeless River we got to from the Hall of the Cornerstone in Disney Castle—Pete was a bit different.

"Who are ya? You new around here?"

"Cut the act."

I was about to get my Keyblade out again, but Pete fell on his backside as he was trying to stand up, probably because Donald cast a spell on him before.

"Ooh, ow!"

"Somethin' doesn't seem quite right here. Are you sure you're Pete?"

Goofy was puzzled, and we finally realized that this guy wasn't the Pete we were used to.

"Well, of course I'm Pete. I'm the captain of the steamboat. So stop botherin' me, see? So hit the road! I gotta go find the little runt what stole my boat!"

Evil cannot be swallowed by darkness. If the darkness in your heart consumes you, you'll lose your heart and become a Heartless. That was also a failing of mine.

However, I recalled something.

This was nothing more than casting away my body—all the requirements for traveling through time should be in place. Could that man have known everything? Even if I lose my physical form...

I found myself in a data simulation of the past.

"Not even Sora and his friends can interfere with this world. They cannot reach it."

That old man was no longer my ally. I must take action for my own benefit, and mine alone. I wouldn't allow the old man to have his way.

Later, I came back to this world through the memories of the three fairies. Memory is a mysterious thing. I knew well why those people were fixated on memories.

How can I ensure that everything happens to my satisfaction? If I could manipulate not only data, but memories as well, could I not more easily conquer this world?

"Sora! 'Your Majesty'! Do not forget."

I saved Sora and his friends, then scowled at the empty air. Everything began when I met that old man. Nothing is more foolish than taking action, just as the old man wanted.

I act for my sake and mine alone, whether in the data world or in the realm of sleep.

"Hmph! We were just fine. You will hear no words of thanks from me, child."

I had no intention of working with them, but they have assisted me on occasion. However, that is all.

I will continue on, steadfast in my purpose: to rule this world. What I seek now is the Black Box. With just that box, I daresay I could obtain anything I desired.

The box is etched.

Love is fragile, and both darkness and light are unreliable. Evil is what will prevail.

I am the mistress of all evil. I won't be consumed by the likes of darkness. Evil is deeper than darkness, and no light can touch it. It will continue to rule this world.

We looked at Pete, who was complaining as he rubbed his back, and then we looked at each other.

"Gawrsh, maybe we made a mistake."

"I'm starting to think the same thing. He hasn't even called any Heartless."

Goofy and I whispered while Donald listened. Then Goofy went to help Pete up.

"Sorry we attacked ya like that, Capt'n Pete."

"Oh yeah? Well, if you're really sorry, then go find my steamboat...Ooh, my achin' back."

He had finally stood up when he said this, but he fell down again, maybe because his back hurt so bad. So we decided to look for his stolen boat, but...

On the way, we helped Mickey, who, like Pete, was King Mickey but not, and finally we found the steamboat *Willie*.

"My steamboat!"

Pete started running toward the boat, which the Pete we knew had boarded. Geez, this sure was confusing.

“Shuddup! Your future’s on the line, pally, so back off and give me the boat!”

The Pete we knew yelled back at the other Pete, and the boat began to sail off as the whistle blew.

We jumped onto the boat. The other Pete followed, and the weight made the boat shake. The Pete we knew slipped and fell into the river, and with that, everything was settled...at least I thought it was. The Pete who fell in the river reached the riverbank and made squelching sounds as he ran off.

“You’ll pay for this!”

The other Pete jumped off the boat.

We looked at each other and ran after Pete, who ran after Pete.

The next thing we saw was Pete and Pete duking it out.

“Hey!”

“Take this!”

“Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow!”

“Ha! You’re still wet behind the ears!”

“I dunno which is which...”

Donald looked puzzled as he walked around and around the two yelling at each other. The only difference between them was their clothes. Well, that’s not completely true, but I really couldn’t tell who was who when they were fighting each other.

One Pete got knocked away, and I could finally tell them apart now that they’d separated. The one knocked away was the Pete of this world!

We stood in front of the Pete we knew as he tried to run away.

## ***Traverse Town Story***

### ***Night of Fate***

This town was where people with nowhere to go gathered.

It was always nighttime in Traverse Town. With its bright neon lights, it seemed cheerful at a glance. Even the stars visible in the night sky were beautiful. But everyone in this town seemed kind of sad. That’s because this was a place where people ended up after they lost their homes due to an unusual phenomenon. In other words, a town in the Realm Between. After we beat Ansem, the place should’ve disappeared, and the people living there would have gone back to their original worlds, but where the heck did Traverse Town go? Later, I went there in a dream, and the smell was

## ***Wonderland Story***

### ***Golden Afternoon***

Somehow, weird stuff always happens around Alice, doesn’t it? Well, I dunno if it’s weird stuff happening around her, or if that world is just weird, but all kinds of weirdos are there, and it feels like Alice is the only normal person in a ridiculous place.

In Alice’s world, I remember being small; getting lost in a room where up, down, left, and right were all mixed up; getting chased by card soldiers; and watching a trial. Anyway, it was all rough stuff. The queen always wanted to chop off someone’s head.

“You may be queen, but I’m afraid that doesn’t give you the right to be so...so mean!”

“Then try us!”

We ran around after Pete like we were in a chase scene...

I remembered all this when I was playing a game.

“There, you’ve just downloaded a promo game for the film.”

Olette told me about a game I could download to my Gummiphone. I’ve found and played all kinds of games in a lot of worlds, but the world of this game somehow had an atmosphere kinda like Timeless River. Like how it was black and white.

“I’m next!”

Donald took the Gummiphone from me and peered at the screen.

“Donald, there’s no way you can beat my high score.”

“Yeah, right! Here I go!”

“I think the both of ya have about the same skill.”

Goofy looked at the screen from behind Donald and me. In the game, King Mickey and I were sliding down a snowy mountain, trying to catch up with Pete.

That reminds me, I wonder how the Pete of Timeless River is doing right now. The Pete we know seemed to be planning something with Maleficent again, but...aside from his involvement with Maleficent, it’s kinda hard to hate him, somehow.

He feels a bit special because he goes to different worlds with us and changes his appearance to match those worlds, and it seems like he’s known Donald, Goofy, and King Mickey for ages, too.

I bet he’s gonna be around for a long time.

kinda nostalgic. Maybe because it was a place packed with the wishes of all sorts of people.

I met Donald and Goofy there, and Leon’s group too, but now I can’t go there anymore. It makes me a little sad. After all, it was the first world I saw after I left Destiny Islands.

When I visited it as a Sleeping World, Joshua told me the town was made up of his dreams. If that was true, maybe it was a different place than when I first visited. But it was still kinda nostalgic.

Someday, I’d like to go back to that town again with my friends.

I remember when Alice said this from the defendant’s set. Alice is a super-honest girl. I like the fact that, if there’s some-thing she wants to say, she’ll come right out and say it.

I gathered evidence in that weird world and saved Alice from the queen, but Alice ended up getting kidnapped anyway.

“She’s gone! Off with the shadows, into darkness,” said the Cheshire Cat.

Later, I found her again in Hollow Bastion, but who was it that kidnapped her?

## ***Agrabah Story***

### ***Try to Forget***

“Rub-a-dub-dub the lamp and have your dearest wishes granted.”

The chatty blue genie, a staple of Agrabah, is named Genie. You’d think he’d be locked up in his lamp all the time, but he’s always full of energy, and he encourages Aladdin a lot. His noisiness reminds me just a bit of Donald. Is it just me? Aladdin’s a bit too honest, even though he used to be a thief, and he and Genie make a great team. I get the feeling that Genie cheers up Aladdin when he’s down.

## ***Atlantica Story***

### ***Under the Sea***

I always thought I was good at swimming in the ocean, but swimming as a fish is totally different! It’s pretty complicated, and I had a bit of trouble before I learned to swim properly. Since I was a fish, maybe I was better off than Donald, an octopus, and Goofy, a turtle, who might have had a tougher time? Or maybe it was easier for them. But it felt great to swim around underwater!

And singing with Ariel and the others was fun, too. It’s hard to sing while dancing, but if you succeed at it, it’s the best feeling ever. I wanna sing with them again.

## ***Twilight Town Story***

### ***Dusk till Dawn***

“Did you hear the rumors about the ghost?” Pence asked in the usual spot. “We have a ghost train and a haunted mansion! There are ghosts everywhere in this town!”

“I heard about it, too.”

I, Hayner, answered the question feeling fed up with the idea of ghosts, and Olette responded in a quiet, worried tone.

“No, no, no! The ghost in the pitch-black coat ended up being Sora’s friend! We’ve had ice cream with him!”

“But this time it really is a ghost! A girl in a white dress will be walking through town, but if you run after her, she disappears.”

“Whaaa?”

## ***Beast’s Castle Story***

### ***Something There***

I remember watching Belle and Beast dance, and seeing them so happy made us happy, too. Even that world, which always felt kinda gloomy, was covered in a gentle light back then.

Cogsworth said, “If the master can love and be loved in return, the spell will be broken,” but what the heck is “true love,” anyway?

What even is “love” to begin with?

I don’t really know why I’m thinking about this so much, but...Huh? I’m not sure if I heard this from someone somewhere, but I get that Beast and Belle love each other. In

## ***Master Eraqus’s Story***

### ***Perpetual Check***

“Have you heard of the ancient Keyblade War?”

In those days, we talked of many things as we sat across from each other at the game board. In that particular moment,

Jafar should’ve been trapped in his lamp, but he got out, and there’s no end to the commotion in Agrabah. I guess it’s inevitable, since it’s a world where genies exist in the first place.

Maybe if Aladdin had asked Genie to get Jasmine back after she was kidnapped, he could’ve done it. But I also get the feeling he’s wasted wishes before. Maybe next time, I’ll become the lamp’s owner and have some sort of wish granted.

I’d better think hard about what to wish for!

Ariel longed for the outside world, just like us before we started on our journey. I totally understood the feeling of wanting to go to unknown places and see things I’ve never seen before, so I wanted to help her. Especially if there was someone she liked there. I hope things work out for her and Eric, but...I think King Triton wasn’t just telling her not to go to the outside world, but rather that deep down he was worried about her. There are obstacles in her way, like Ursula, but I bet she’ll be fine if Eric’s with her!

That reminds me, it was Ursula who appeared in the dream version of Destiny Islands, wasn’t it? I wonder why she was there?

I was puzzled. Something bothered me about this girl in the white dress.

“By any chance, does this girl have blond hair?”

“You know all about her, huh? Have you seen her before?”

“I don’t think that girl is a ghost. Maybe.”

I crossed my arms as I thought about it, and Pence and Olette looked at me. It was only a vague feeling, but I did feel like I knew that girl. Just a hunch, though. I hope that girl gets to have sea salt ice cream with us on the clock tower someday.

Surely someday.

the end, though, I still don’t get what “love” is. I’m almost positive someone explained it to me once as a special power that only people have, but who was that?

When I first met Beast, he said this:

“I simply believed. Nothing more to it.”

I believed in what he said, and because of that, I was able to fight. If the power to believe is also love—then maybe the “power of love” is similar to the power of connections between hearts.

I still don’t really get it, though!

we had many types of game pieces before us. This, too, was part of our training.

We were still young, and we devoted ourselves to our studies together. However, before I realized it, our paths diverged.

Despite this, those paths sometimes intersected over the long years, and we continued to have sparse exchanges. After all, we were friends. Or at least that's what I thought.

How many years has it been since the black miasma you unleashed from your Keyblade scarred my face?

"That power...Has the darkness taken you, Xehanort?"

"Not your concern."

## ***Enchanted Dominion Story***

### ***Sleeping Light (by Terra)***

What I sensed within her as she slept was light itself. And that feeling was very similar to what I felt when I stood in front of Ven. This was Enchanted Dominion.

"Her heart is filled with light—not the slightest touch of darkness. Just the kind of heart I need." Speaking these words, a woman wearing pitch-black clothing emerged from the shadows.

Ah, so that meant Ven's heart also overflowed with light? That was something I didn't have.

I turned to face her and asked a question.

"For what?"

"Imagine with me, the most glorious of futures...Seven of the purest hearts, each overflowing with light. When brought

## ***Dwarf Woodlands Story***

### ***I'm Wishing (by Aqua)***

Mirror that led me astray...Mirror, mirror...

I had only just started my journey when I first encountered this mirror. After I became a Keyblade Master, this is the world I visited at the start of my long journey to both bring home Ventus, who had left at the same time as Terra, and locate Master Xehanort. Maybe, back then, I still didn't understand anything.

"Ventus, why won't you wake up?"

As I gazed at the sleeping Snow White, I remembered the words I once said to Ven. Since then, Ven has fallen asleep again, and my long journey continues.

Is the me I see reflected in the mirror really me?

## ***Castle of Dreams Story***

### ***Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo! (by Ventus)***

"I guess dreams really do come true."

Cinderella said this with a smile on her face. That's right, they do. Just believing that they will isn't enough, but if you believe and work toward them, they will.

When I arrived in this world, I had shrunk, and I didn't know what was going to happen. But, despite Lucifer, the cat, getting in the way, the mouse Jaq and I got a dress ready for Cinderella to go to the ball, and we saw her off as she rode to the castle in a pumpkin carriage.

"What's-a Ven-Ven dream?" Jaq asked me as we gazed at the shining castle.

## ***Kingdom of Corona Story***

### ***Healing Incantation***

Rapunzel was a girl so full of energy that I couldn't believe she'd been locked in a tower her whole life. She laughed a lot but also got depressed easily. She looked so happy when she went outside for the first time that I couldn't help being happy

After uttering this, you departed. Your spirit of inquiry regarding the world caused you to fall into darkness and seek both the  $\chi$ -blade and Kingdom Hearts.

You said that darkness is a beginning, not an end, and that the world was born from darkness. However, even if that's true, the world must not be returned to where it was before it came into being.

I believe the measures I took were successful in stopping you; don't you think so, Xehanort?

I was always by your side.

together, they grant the power to rule all worlds," she said. Her goal was the worlds themselves. And the aura emanating from her was darkness itself—as though she was the complete opposite of the sleeping girl.

"In your heart, there is darkness just waiting to be awakened."

As she said this, she gave a faintly ominous smile.

"I dunno what you're talking about."

"Perhaps not yet...But I have power over sleep."

The woman—Maleficent—raised her staff, and I fell into an irresistible sleep.

With no idea of what would happen next.

"...Only your heart is hollow enough to be a demon's."

The me in the mirror murmured this and laughed. Maybe she was a version of me swallowed by darkness. I merely imagined that the darkness hadn't engulfed me; it already had, hadn't it?

I reached out to the me in the mirror. The mirror sucked me in. And what stretched out in front of me was a repeating world that seemed to go on forever.

"I want to let go of everything and fade into the darkness." Yes, it's true there are times I feel that way.

But even so, I continue on. For the sake of my bonds with my friends.

My dream...My dream was to become a Keyblade Master along with Terra and Aqua. It wasn't just my dream, but one all three of us shared.

"Hope-a Ven-Ven dream come true, too."

"I just need to keep on believing, right?" I answered Jaq and thought about Terra and Aqua. If I believed, everything would turn out fine. Because I believed in both of them.

I always believed, I think.

Since long, long ago—before I woke up. I believed in my dream.

too. I remember I was both thrilled and worried when I first went to the outside world, too.

It was really fun using Rapunzel's hair to go across the rocks. That hair really had some awesome magic in it. But



maybe it wasn't something to feel so grateful for, since it was the reason she was locked up in the first place. Hmm, does that mean magic can sometimes end up as a curse?

The lanterns we saw from the shore of the lake sure were pretty. We didn't get on the boat with those two 'cause we didn't wanna be a nuisance, but I bet the view from the boat was extra pretty.

## ***Arendelle Story***

### ***Here I Stand***

It's so cold! Well, it was cold, at any rate.

I grew up on tropical islands, and I just can't stand the cold! At least, that's what I thought. But Arendelle was a nice place. Sliding down snowy mountains is surprisingly fun, and cheerful people, like Olaf, live there, too. But hey, there aren't really any bad worlds. I bet Arendelle will still be fun when the spell's broken and it's no longer cold. I wanna go again sometime!

At any rate, I can't believe all that cold was because of Elsa. How powerful must her magic be? But Elsa's heart must be super strong, too, if she shut that magic away for so long

## ***Daybreak Town Story***

### ***You and Keyblade Story***

The first time I met you was in front of a fountain in this town. You woke up and immediately ended up fighting with your Keyblade. I watched the whole thing with one of the Foretellers. My name is Chirithy. I'm a Spirit and your familiar.

"Your pursuit of light made you the perfect candidate for a Keyblade wielder."

I think you looked a little confused as you listened to my explanation. Boy, that takes me back. After that, you went to all sorts of worlds and collected light with your friends. It was our mission to get rid of darkness, collect light—Lux—and save the world. For that purpose, Keyblade wielders were divided into five Unions, and each Union would collect Lux. The leaders of the five Unions were Foretellers.

We went to a lot of worlds together, huh? And we met and helped all kinds of people in those worlds.

But...the atmosphere in Daybreak Town was changing, little by little. And Keyblade wielders consumed by darkness began to appear. Every single Chirithy is linked to a Keyblade wielder. And I knew the version of me that disappeared in front of me.

Back then, you had a dream, right? In the dream, the five Foretellers had gathered. You met Ephemeral the day after having that dream. He told you something.

"The worlds we visit—the worlds of fairy tales—are nothing more than holograms. You know, projections. The light we collect there is actually this world's light."

You tilted your head to the side, confused at what Ephemeral said. That was only natural. Even I didn't really understand what he was talking about. But it's true that I had just a slight inkling of it. Because I knew you'd had that dream.

"I'm gathering information, trying to figure out how the whole thing works. My hunch is that the Book of Prophecies held by the Foretellers is what's creating these holograms."

After thinking a little, you told Ephemeral about your dream of the Foretellers.

"Let's head to the place you saw in your dream."

After the two of you left, another me appeared in front of me. I spoke to me.

"You're not the same color you were before."

I'm really glad that, with Flynn's help, the magic—the curse—in Rapunzel's hair was broken.

I hope she'll live happily ever after in her new life as a princess. But the thought of Flynn as a king...Eh, he'll probably do fine!

I wish them both the best!

through her own willpower. I get why the Organization is after her. And Anna must be really strong too, considering how hard she worked to save Elsa.

I wonder if the bond between sisters is similar to the one between me and Riku? Even if we fight, even if we get separated, somehow our hearts are still connected and we believe in each other. I wonder if that's how sisters are.

I hope Anna and Elsa make up, spring returns to the kingdom, and everything goes well from now on in Arendelle.

But if the snow melts, what'll happen to Olaf and Marshmallow?

The other me was dyed a darker color. For some reason, it filled me with uneasiness.

In the end, you two weren't able to get to the Foretellers.

"We know how to get in now. Let's save the rest for another day."

You nodded in response. "We may not be in the same Union, but we're friends, right? Let's meet tomorrow at Fountain Square. How about noon?"

You and he shook hands.

That night, you were all smiles as you sat on your bed. And you told me about Ephemeral. Since you looked happy, it made me happy too.

"You made a new friend? That's great! No wonder you're smiling. I hear having friends is nice. But I wouldn't know because I don't have any."

When I said that, you looked a little distressed, and then you pointed at yourself.

"Huh? You?"

You nodded. I felt a little shy. I never thought a familiar like me could make friends with anyone.

"You're my friend...?"

It made me so happy that you thought of me as a friend.

The next day, you waited and waited, but Ephemeral never came to the Fountain Square. You looked really sad.

"A friend always keeps their promise. Maybe he had an emergency. You should give him the benefit of the doubt."

Despite me telling you this, you didn't seem to cheer up at all.

"Don't be sad. When you're sad, it makes me sad too. After all, we're friends, right?"

I stretched my hand out and took yours. And then you hugged me tight.

But the atmosphere in the town kept getting worse. Lots of things happened around you, and then you met Skuld, a friend of Ephemeral just like you.

"It's not a competition. Or at least it shouldn't be. Our goal of protecting the light is the same. There's no need for us to fight," Skuld said. As you and Skuld searched for Ephemeral, you learned about a plan to send Keyblade wielders to a new

world. The group made up of these Keyblade wielders, called Dandelions, was created by Master Ava. The purpose of this plan was to survive the end of the world. But you chose not to join the Dandelions. Yes, that's the kind of person you were. I know that.

And then the end of the world—the Keyblade War—began.

You battled the Foretellers and collapsed. Before long, Ephemer and Skuld came to you.

“Let's go.”

Ephemer held out his hand to you as you lay on the ground. Your world was engulfed in light, and you fell asleep.

When you wake up, what kind of world you'll be in is up to you.